HEAVENWARD

J. B. REMENSNYDER, D.D., LL.D.

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"Fight the good fight of Faith, lay hold on eternal Life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."—1 TIM. vi. 12.

This is to Certify

That Frances J. Cunningham

having been duly instructed in the doctrines and duties of the Christian Religion, as confessed by the

Evangelical Lutheran Church,

was received into full communion with St. Mark's Ev. Lutheran Church, Jeannette, Pa.

by the solemn rite of CONFIRMATION, *on the* Twenty-fourth *day of* April

in the year of our Lord 19 11

Geo. O. Ritter

Pastor.

HEAVENWARD

A Guide for Youth.

BY

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FOREWORD.

THIS little volume owes its origin to the conviction of the author, that a book of its character is demanded both by the particular state of the times, and the condition and wants of the Church. Its design is to lift the aspirations of youth from perishing earthly prizes to a HEAVENWARD aim, and to an incorruptible crown. It also counsels the pilgrim, who has already set out for the better country, how he may overcome amid the many perils that beset him, and ever rise higher, in his race for eternal life. And as the Blessed Goal is reached, and the portals of the heavenly city appear, it presents to the Christian those comforting promises and assurances of Scripture, which shall bear him up amid the swelling of the Jordan of Death, and bring him in triumph to the celestial shore.

The HEAVENWARD of the author, is no effort of Nature to ascend by the guidance of Reason to the heights of a pure morality. But it is the pilgrimage of Faith, as, in childlike humility, it follows the narrow path of Jesus the Crucified,

until it shall see the King in His beauty, and rest forever in the bosom of Love. Accordingly, the way here pointed out leads by the Cross of Christ, and by the Church of God; the steps of ascent to the heights of grace are made to be the Word and Sacraments. A piety in the Church, is counselled as the only path that surely and steadily conducts HEAVENWARD. And never was there an age, which more than the present, was in need of this species of devotional literature.

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HEAVENWARD.

PART I.

The Good Beginning.

A GOOD beginning does not always assure a good ending. The first step, however, in any work or undertaking is of the utmost importance. He who never begins never succeeds. But when resolution masters this first great barrier, and the beginning is once made, success itself is near.

And in nothing is this so true as in religion. Here, above everywhere else, the soul is wont to hesitate at the first step. The beginning is what troubles it. It shrinks back, as though the gate to the Christian life is of such dread holiness that it dares not set foot upon its threshold. To be a child of God, to walk upon the path of piety, seems too great an undertaking. Confirmation it can only view in the far distance.

The thought of approaching the Holy Supper fills it with trembling. The new life seems to it a blessed dream, rather than a golden reality. Heavenward, to the crown of life, its longings can scarcely aspire.

But the real difficulty here is *in the beginning*. He who takes the first step upon the narrow way will find the others to follow far more easily than he had supposed. The holy pilgrimage once begun, many an obstacle that before had loomed up like a great mountain will diminish until, like the chained lions in the way of Bunyan's pilgrim, it will be passed by with safety and ease. It is at this very point of beginning that more souls have failed than anywhere else in the Christian race. Had they but begun, they would have succeeded; but because they would not summon resolution to take THE FIRST STEP, they did not gain the prize.

Let us, then, consider the youthful soul in this most critical and eventful period, when it debates the question of beginning the heavenly pilgrimage and of entering upon the race for eternal life.

CHAPTER I.

THE CALL.

THE reason for our making this beginning in piety is, that we are not left without witness of a better country. We are not heathens, but we live in a Christian land and time. The light of the truth as it is in Jesus shines down to us from the holy cradle of Bethlehem. We have had Christian parents. In our infancy they consecrated us to God at the altar. And the earliest words they taught us, as we bent at their knees, were to lisp loving prayers to the blessed Saviour.

The call, then, to religion comes first *from our Holy Baptism.* We are not out of, but already in the Church, by that solemn act of our pious parents. As with heartfelt prayers they held us up for the baptismal blessing, the Lord elected us for His own, adopted us into the covenant, and made us holy unto Himself. It was there that we were planted into the kingdom of God, and made heirs of its privileges and blessings. And now, in our conscious years, there comes to us this call, this admonition, and this reproof from our Holy Baptism. It tells us that as God there bestowed upon us His grace, and drew near to

us in blessing, so it is a despising of the heavenly gift, a contempt of the covenant, and a wanton disregard of our devout parents, to pay no heed to the vows therein made on our behalf.

Again; this call comes to us *from the Word of God.* This holy book ever witnesses to us of our duty. Its sacred pages, like flaming characters upon the sky, point out to us the path of safety. It tells us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It warns us to "flee from the wrath to come." It charges us to "remember now our Creator in the days of our youth." It admonishes us of the danger of postponing a moment longer the great step: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." It demonstrates the peril of seeking the deceptive prizes of earthly pleasure, while the undying soul is neglected: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

It therefore appeals to us to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" to "give no sleep to the eyes or slumber to the eyelids," until we find the Holy One of Israel; yea, even to "agonize to enter in at the strait gate." And as this Word is a call from God, a message from eternity, an invitation to turn aside from death, and to enter the golden streets of the heavenly

Paradise, O how like a winged arrow it should pierce the heart!

It is also a call *from the Church.* The Church is the mouthpiece of the living God. By her the preached Word is continually addressed to your ear. The Holy Ghost adds His unction to the blessed gospel she proclaims. And many a time, in her courts, has the shaft of conviction entered your soul. You have felt yourself a sinner. You have seen the danger of refusing to surrender yourself to Christ. You have felt that the Spirit strove with you, and that to resist would be to grieve Him away, and to quench the igniting spark of your eternal hope. The Church is now thus calling you. The pastor, whom you know and love, has been pleading with you to come out and confess your Lord, and begin the Christian pilgrimage. You have heard His fervent prayers for you, while with deep anxiety He entreated that God would move you, and that the Holy Ghost might enlighten you to your eternal welfare, and help you to be wise and to make the great resolve.

It comes to you, again, *from your conscience.* That once slept, but now it is awakened. It tells you of a guilt which alone atoning mercy can blot out. A still small voice whispers to you in the day, and suffers you not to rest at night.

It tells you that God's Word is true; that your pastor is right; that delay is hazardous, and that your choice is now plainly narrowed down to one between duty and pleasure, good and evil, life and death.

Such is this great and solemn CALL which now reaches your ear. Nor is there any evading it. It presses upon you, and must be answered. Whether, too, it will ever come again or not, is a question. In God's mysterious providence, this may be your only opportunity. Rejected now, the day may soon come when your lament shall be, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved."

Now is the day of grace;
Now is the Saviour come;
The Lord is calling, "Seek my face,
And I will guide you home."

A Father bids you speed;
Oh, wherefore then delay?
He calls in love; he sees your need;
He bids you come to-day.

To-day the prize is won;
The promise is to save;
Then, oh, be wise, to-morrow's sun
May shine upon your grave.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONDITION.

THE call to salvation is also accompanied with a *condition*. The call itself is entirely of grace. It is a call to pardon. It is a call to a ransom bought with blood. And this costly price has been paid by another: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7.)

A sacrificial Lamb has been provided, who paid the debt of our guilt, and who, while deep darkness veiled the shuddering earth, drank for us a cup of trembling, aye! a cup of the bitterness of hell. "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Let us not then imagine that our salvation is to be bought over again, and that any work, or penance, or merit of ours is now to purchase it. No! it is given to us freely: "For by grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Eph. ii. 8.)

But while it requires no work, no ground, no merit of ours to accept the call, and to secure the gift of grace, there still is a condition. This is FAITH. It is the great, the sole, and only condi-

tion of salvation. This the Saviour declared to Nicodemus, in the memorable words, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.)

And it is written again: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." When the jailer at Philippi fell trembling at the feet of Paul, and cried, "What shall I do to be saved?" the reply was given, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And this is still the only answer to every earnest seeker after salvation.

When, then, your soul cries out anxiously, "What shall I do to inherit everlasting life? I hear the warning, awakening call, and I know not whither to flee," this is the counsel that comes from heaven, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Fly to the foot of the cross! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Believe in Him as your full justification! Believe in Him as your Shepherd and Guide! Believe in Him as the gentle Master on whose loving bosom you can, like the disciple John, repose your troubled head, and find blessed peace from the wounds of conscience!

Thus is faith the saving condition. It is no good or meritorious work, but it is simply the

hand that takes hold upon Jesus, that appropriates His atoning blood, and makes His righteousness our own. We have but to look unto Him, uplifted on the tree, and live. No one, either, that cometh unto Him, will in any wise be cast out. And thus fortified by faith, even though we have been the chief of sinners, we shall fear no evil, but stand firm amid a dissolving world, and before the terrors of the judgment-seat of the universe.

"Jesus, thy Blood and Righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

"Bold shall I stand in Thy great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully through Thee absolved I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame."

Beware, too, that you are not led to look upon other conditions than this scriptural one of Faith as the means of appropriating salvation. For many in their human wisdom think it too simple, too free, and too exalting to the glory of grace. They would therefore heap oppressive burdens upon the seeker for life.

A frequent condition thus imposed is that of a *new life* before one can be assured of justifying faith. But "God commendeth His love toward

us, in that *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us." God does not regenerate us because of our faith, but He regenerates us that we may have justifying faith. We are not to put our sins first from us and then go to God, but to come to Him with and in our sins, as the only one who can deliver us from their power. Let, then, the sinner not wait till he become better, but in his poverty, in his guilt, and in his woe, cast himself upon the mercy of God, crying, "Lord, I would believe, help Thou mine unbelief."

Others tell the troubled soul that there is no other way than by high and excited *feeling*—by a sharp and distracting experience, ending in a sudden conversion, and a miraculous outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and a bursting forth of unspeakable rapture, that God can be found. And many, by these imprudent counsels, are led to search for some other condition than the true and scriptural one. And long as they thus grope in errror, they will never come to life.

LUTHER gives this counsel upon this important subject: "Keep it well fixed in your mind that a Christian heart is one which hears the word of God concerning the forgiveness of sins, and *believes* it without doubting, *though it neither sees nor feels it.* I believe, though I have no especial feelings about it, this will *afterwards* follow of

itself. First true Faith, *then the experience and effects of Faith* with all its blessings."

This, then, is all that God asks, Faith, which He also freely gives the seeker, and which is the life-boat by which you shall be borne over the billows of time's dangerous sea to the port of eternal peace.

CHAPTER III.

THE DECISION.

YOU have now reached a solemn and critical hour! You have heard the call of grace; you have been acquainted with the condition of salvation, and now you must make answer. No decision greater than this was ever to be made. It is to decide for or against God; for or against religion; for or against yourself. A mistaken letter has sometimes cost a throne; a mistaken step has cost a human life; a mistaken word has ruined a good name; but a mistake here involves consequences infinitely more vast and far-reaching. It is eternal life or death that you are now called to decide upon.

It is a supreme moment for you. Like Luther before the Diet of Worms, yours is in-

deed an august trial, and a cloud of unseen witnesses gaze intently thereon. The recording angel is waiting to take down the decision; and take heed lest your sentence be that at which the Eastern monarch's knees smote together: "TEKEL: thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting." (Dan. v. 27.)

It is your WILL which must now take action. It can evade the responsibility no longer. The appeal has reached its court, and it must speak the final word. Its voice alone can give you quiet. If it decides for worldliness, it may give you peace for a time; but it will be a false, delusive peace.

Satan, indeed, prompts you to decline the call. And ready is he with artful words. He suggests postponement, and tasting of the pleasures of sin for yet a little season. "To-morrow," he says, "will do as well as to-day." He magnifies the pleasures of the world, and exaggerates the pains of bearing the cross.

One of his shrewdest suggestions, too, is that piety itself should deter the soul from taking the great step. That it is not ready; that it is not good enough, and that it will only relapse and fall away, and be guilty of still greater sin; and that, therefore, it will be an act of impiety to go forward now, that one had better wait until he can

live up more fully to his good resolutions. Thus plausibly does the crafty old enemy insinuate difficulties and obstacles into the way, lest the youthful soul obey the voice of the Spirit, and resolve with Esther, "I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish." (Esther iv. 16.)

And now then the GREAT QUESTION comes, What will you do? Will you hearken to the world, or will you yield to the movings of the Holy Ghost? Will you hazard all at an earthly altar, or will you choose that good part which will eternally satisfy your higher nature, and which can never be taken from you? Will you serve sense for its hard wages, or will you walk with the children of Zion, and at last be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting?

My dear young friend, this solemn question is one all for yourself. It is for the still deeps of your own bosom. It is between you and your God. May, then, a loving heavenly Father give you grace to answer it aright! May He come to your rescue, and move you both "to will and to do of His good pleasure!" May He impart to you the strength to come out once and for all on the Lord's side!

In this name, then, and in this simple and holy Faith, take now this great, this all-important, this eternally decisive step; and may the bless-

ing of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, rest upon your decision, crowning it with life and peace for evermore.

CHAPTER IV.

CONFIRMATION.

HAVING now, by the grace of God, decided to make the good beginning, the next step is a public CONFESSION of this, your purpose. Your inner faith must be attested by an outward sign. To this your own inclinations should prompt you. You should desire to tell what God hath done for your soul.

But the Scripture has not left this to choice. Confession of the faith that is within us is an absolute requisite of Christianity. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; *and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*," says the apostle. And the Lord Jesus Himself declares, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. x. 32.)

We must take upon us, in the face of the world, the badge of Christian discipleship. This confession is to be made by publicly uniting with the Church. That is, it is to be done by joining ourselves to the fellowship of believers, and by keeping the Holy Sacraments according to Christ's command, and laboring in the kingdom of God.

Such public confession is also, not only a duty, but a most precious help to the inexperienced believer. The Church surrounds the soul with the means of grace, *i. e.*, those instrumentalities (the Word and Sacraments), which have been appointed for the special purpose of keeping vigorous the religious life, guarding it against relapse, sustaining it with godly edification, and helping it so to "run that it may obtain." Whoever seeks to lead a pious life outside of the Church, and to enter heaven by some other than the true "Door," denies the Lord that bought him, and is "a thief and a robber." (John x. 1.) "He who has not the Church for his mother, cannot have God for his Father," is a sound maxim of the early Church.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is this Door of entrance into the visible Church. But where Baptism has been administered in infancy, the Church, taking for a type the apostolic laying

on of hands (Acts viii. 17), practices CONFIRMATION as the rite of confession for the believing adult. Confirmation, as the word itself implies, is our personal *confirming* or ratification of the covenant made for us by our parents in our infant baptism. And to those who therein zealously with heart and soul ratify that consecration, the everlasting God alike ratifies it, by drawing near and granting a new outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

And to this holy and beautiful rite the Church now invites you, and your conscience prompts you to come. You have, we will presume, for a time been numbered with the class of catechumens. There, led by your pastor and trusted spiritual guide, you have been taught to sit at the feet of Jesus, and hearken to the regenerating word. You have been carefully instructed in the truths of salvation, and you have been shown the narrow way of life.

You have heard Sinai, wreathed in flame, thundering forth the awful judgments of Jehovah against sin and disobedience, and giving the *Ten Commandments* as God's law to men. In the *Creed*, you have been led to look upon the Holy Child Jesus coming to save us from our sins, and to die on Calvary, that the sword of a transgressed law might not pierce our hearts; and you have

been taught of the Holy Ghost, outpoured by God, to begin and carry forward within you the new life unto sanctification. In the *Lord's Prayer*, you have been taught to what power to resort for protection and defence in every hour of need. The *Holy Sacraments*, too, have been unfolded to your heart, that you might draw from them their precious treasures of grace.

You have thus been instructed, and counseled, and warned, that you may not lightly take the great step before you, but seal your confirmation with such a strong resolve that you may never break the sacred vow.

And may this season of religious catechisation have been one of unspeakable preciousness to you; and may the hallowed impressions therein made be never forgotten until your dying hour, and prove the blessing of God unto the salvation of your soul!

And now the hour of your Confirmation is at hand. It is, next to your Holy Baptism, the most blessed step in your life. The Church above and the Church below, are looking upon you. Prepared by fervent wrestling with God for His help and blessing, you take your stand at the altar. And then, kneeling before the Lord of Hosts, while the congregation plead for you, and loving angelic faces look down, you

vow that you will be the Lord's and His alone for time and for eternity. And then the Hearer of prayer and the Covenant-keeping Jehovah attends, and imparts His benediction, even the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, and seals you to Himself.

Rise, then, young disciple! Henceforth a new world opens before thee! Thou hast entered the family of God, the blessed communion of souls. The Church on earth welcomes and rejoices over thee. Thy pious parents return thanks to God for thee, now begotten unto them in bonds of the Gospel, which neither time nor death can sever. Yea! heaven itself rings with exultant rapture, and the angelic choirs strike their golden harps again, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Thou hast indeed made *a good beginning;* mayest thou have none the less blessed and joyful an ending!

"My name is entered on the list,
I've plighted hand and word,
To love and live for none but Christ,
My Saviour and my Lord.
Ye comrades in the ranks below,
And ye who wear the crown,
Witness the irrevocable vow
That seals me as His own.

"And I will prove that vow sincere,
Whate'er the cost may be;
Nor weal, nor woe, nor hope nor fear,
Shall shake my constancy.

For Him I will not love my life,
But shame and death defy;
Undaunted in the hour of strife,
And meek in victory.

"Oh! happy soldiers they, who serve
Beneath Thy banner, Lord!
And light the task, if Thou but nerve
The arm to wield the sword.
The sacred pledge in childhood given,
To such success assures;
And still they hear a voice from heaven
Repeat, The prize is yours."

CHAPTER V.

THE HOLY COMMUNION.

CONFIRMATION, as a public recognition of Holy Baptism, acknowledges the right and obligation of the young confessor to a full communion with the visible Church. He is, therefore, now ready to complete his good beginning, by standing at that Holy of Holies, the Lord's table, and participating in the mystery of the Supper. To it his eyes have often been turned with trembling reverence, and with a deep and

shrinking sense of unworthiness. But let him remember that it is the Supper of his Lord, who Himself was tried in all points like as we are, who "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust." And, therefore, let him not fear that his desire to obey his Master's dying command will bring upon him other than a priceless blessing.

To a proper participation in the Supper, an intelligent knowledge of the nature, meaning, and design of the Sacrament is of the first importance. Many Christians, and especially the young, go in what we may call a *blind faith* to the Holy Supper. They believe there is something infinitely solemn and precious about it—but what that something is, to them is a sealed letter. But thus the Sacrament loses much of its efficacy. Nor is there any reason for such ignorance; for the word of God is abundantly clear in regard to this great subject.

The words of the Saviour in instituting this Sacrament, were, "This is my Body, this is my Blood! These solemn and memorable words are what clothe this Sacrament with its most glorious pre-eminence. They are the key to its highest and deepest, its richest and costliest significance. While skeptical reason turns coldly away from

them, these are the words upon which faith lovingly and adoringly dwells as it comes to the Holy Table.

It is, as St. Paul makes bold to say, a "*communion of the body and blood of the Lord.*" O, wondrous and incomprehensible grace! That I, a poor, dying, sinful mortal, should be refreshed with such heavenly food! And how, too, this very feature of the Holy Communion addresses itself to my inmost wants! I am foul and guilty; this precious Blood shall make me clean. My faith is weak and fainting; this holy Body of the Lord shall make it strong, and be in me the germ of resurrection to a new spiritual life, mighty to the overcoming of temptation, and to faithfulness unto the end. Dwelling then upon these most sacred words, "This is my Body, this is my Blood," faith can never exhaust the priceless riches of the Holy Supper; as led by the Spirit it ever attains further, and deeper, and more blessed views of that precious stream of grace which here flows in its utmost brightness, purity, and power.

The Lord's Supper, again, is, in the most notable degree, a Sacrament of *confession.* "For as often," says the apostle, "as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, *ye do show the Lord's death* till He come." It is, therefore, our declaration and

testimony to the atoning sufferings and death of the crucified Lamb. In it we make a loving confession of faith. We remember our Lord's passion. We remember the night of His betrayal, and of the institution of this Supper with His dying hand. We remember His struggle and sweat of blood in Gethsemane. We remember His shame and woe, and His infinite agony, as, lifted upon the cross, He expired with a cry that pierced the heart of Nature, and opened the graves of the dead.

And remembering, thus, with penitent love and sorrow His death, by this our public confession we do *show it forth* to all the world, that this miracle of grace may not pass unheeded, and that this precious blood may not have been shed in vain; but either become a means of conviction and salvation to the impenitent observer, or an accusing witness against him in the last day.

It is again a feast of *holy unity and fellowship of love*. Says the Scripture: "For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." "The wine is the Blood, the bread is the Body of Christ. We receive into us, make by assimilation parts of ourselves, that wine, that bread—we become, therefore, by participation of that bread, one Bread,

i. e., ONE BODY, hence the close and literal participation in and with Christ." *

As, then, by this Holy Communion we are partakers of one and the same Christ, so do we become one with each other. We are members of the same body—branches of the same vine, streams of the same fountain—disciples of the same common Master. And, therefore, does this brotherly meeting and communion at the Lord's table pledge us to a most tender and loving unity and fellowship of walk, with all true confessors of Christ the world over. No distinctions of language, or nation, or riches, or rank, dare separate us, but the sacred tie of Christian unity must make our hearts, our hopes and aspirations, one on earth, even as we shall be one at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, in the glorious assembly and Church of the first-born on high.

Thus, then, to be strengthened by so holy a communion with Christ, thus to make a loving confession of His death before the world, and thus to join in blessed unity with your fellow-believers for the sake of the Christ that is in them, are now, since your Baptism and Confirmation, your holy privilege. Thankfully and joyfully, then, approach this love-crowned table.

The more you feel your unworthiness, the

* Alford's Greek Testament, Vol. II., p. 558.

greater should be your anxiety to receive the wedding garment of purity and holy strength herein offered. "For this Holy Sacrament hath been instituted for the special *comfort and strengthening* of those who humbly confess their sins, and who hunger and thirst after righteousness."* It is *not unworthiness*, but *impenitence and indifference* that will turn the sacramental grace into the curse that fell upon Judas, for partaking of it with a traitor's heart.

Nevertheless, this most holy audience with God, even to those who have joined in it many years, is ever a time of searching penitence and of devout and prayerful preparation before they enter upon it. For the first time, then, it is not strange that it should be a moving hour to the young communicant.

St. Paul, therefore, thus advises us for this solemn season: "Let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Repair, then, to thy closet, and there ask thyself whether thou truly feelest thyself to be an undone sinner? Whether thou dost ardently desire to be released from thy burden, and to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit? And whether thou dost henceforth surrender thyself entirely to thy Lord, to obey Him, and to do all

* Lutheran Communion Service,—Exhortation.

things by His gracious direction and guidance alone?

Neglect not, also, to submit thyself to the Church's examination, and publicly to confess thy sins, and to receive that full absolution which the minister there, on the authority of God's Word, which has given the power of the keys to the Church, proclaims to the truly penitent.

And, then, fear not, in childlike humility and with uplifted heart appealing for divine aid, to take this last step which consummates thine entrance into the family, and communion, and Church of God. And as thou dost partake, mayest thou verily "discern the Lord's body," (1 Cor. xi. 29); and be refreshed with heavenly food, and commune with the King in His beauty; and depart, feeling a new faith in Jesus,—a new rapture in the Spirit,—a new strength against sin and evil,—a new love to all brethren in the Gospel, and a new and blessed confidence that thy God shall be with thee forever and ever.

PART II.

The Christian Race.

NOTHING is more beautiful and hopeful than the sight of the young disciple, by Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Communion, making a good beginning in the heavenward pilgrimage. But the Saviour, at this critical point in the journey, thus warns the aspirant for an immortal crown: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth the will* of my Father." After the leaves of promise, therefore, must come holy fruit. Confession must be followed by constancy and perseverance in grace. It is alone by "patient continuance in well doing," that we can inherit "glory, and honor, and everlasting life."

The Christian pilgrimage is a *race*, a continuous course, a perpetual progress; and it is only by "pressing" with all our might "toward the mark," that we can ever reach the prize. Dangers are before us. Earthly enemies and powers of darkness resist our advance. There are, indeed,

sweet flowers and refreshing fountains and pure joys, such as the world knows not of, to renew the fainting pilgrim. Yet the way is thorny; the cross is heavy; the ascent is narrow and steep; and with bleeding feet alone can we reach the blessed goal. The great question then is, whether the holy vow made in Confirmation will be kept; and whether you will not stop with your good beginning, but, with unfaltering step, press forward in your race, obeying the Master's command, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii. 10.)

All-important, then, is it, that you now "run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith." That, therefore, you may not faint upon your holy pilgrimage, and not grow weary in well-doing, and that you may prove constant in your good confession to the joy and comfort of your fellow-disciples, and to the glory of your Lord, and thus at last receive the approving plaudit, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," we address you the following earnest counsels. And may God make them the dew of His Spirit upon the tender bud of your faith, that it may break forth into the full-blown and fragrant flower of life-long piety.

SECTION I.

Dangers.

MANY are the *dangers* that beset the Heavenward course. Numerous are the rocks upon which the young voyager may make shipwreck of his faith. Let us first, then, direct his anxious concern to these foes to grace, so that he may be warned, and come safely through them all. Yielding weakly to their onset, he will soon lose his faith and his heavenly title, but coming unhurt out of the fiery furnace, the discipline will only prove and confirm his Christian character, and brighten his blessed hope.

Firmness, patience, heroism are here needed. Self-knowledge is of the highest importance. Vigilance alike, is constantly required. The severer the conflict the more glorious will be the victory. Let, therefore, the youthful Christian be girded with the armor of light, and acquit himself as a true hero of the Cross, amid the manifold perils and enemies which he must needs encounter.

CHAPTER I.

DISCOURAGEMENTS.

ONE of the first things the youthful confessor often notices after Confirmation is over, and after he has departed from the Lord's table, is a declension in the flame of his devotion. He does not feel that joy and ardor which at first animated him; the same tender love does not move his heart, and the same entire self-consecration no longer burns within him. Nor does the sense of the Spirit's presence seem as clear to him as before. He does not grow in grace and in close fellowship with his Lord as much as he had fondly hoped. And then the *danger* is, that he will become discouraged, that he will think he has been self-deceived, and that he will doubt whether he has really made a true beginning.

But these experiences are common to any commencement in life, and older Christians are no strangers to them. We must not expect the freshness of the morning when the noonday's heat begins to descend upon us. If our ardor has somewhat declined, yet it may now, in its

greater evenness, firmness, and maturity, be far stronger than before. The child is more eager, but not so enduring at work, as the man.

Job possessed great and unwavering piety, and yet even he at one time cried out almost in despair to Jehovah: "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?" How touching, too, the complaint of David, when he feels that the Holy One has departed far from him, and left him alone and disconsolate: "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice!" And did not the blessed Saviour Himself on the cross, when the great darkness fell upon Him, cry out in the bitter sense of desertion by the Father: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

And yet, in these cases, God was only trying the faith of His servants; to make them perfect through suffering, and to show them that their whole hope and trust were in Him, and that they must abide under the shadow of the wings of the Most High for evermore. And soon as the tendrils of their faith were enabled again to lay hold upon Him, He took away the cloud of blackness, and lo! the beauteous bow of His love and presence again filled the sky!

Let, then, the youthful pilgrim learn to expect lights and shadows, hills of joy and vales of gloom, upon his journey Heavenward. And though dark the night, never yield to discouragement; never abandon thy hope; never surrender thy faith; never give up still seeking to walk with God! But when coldness, and indifference, and apparent want of fruitfulness, lead thee to exclaim with the Psalmist: "Will the Lord cast off forever, and will He be favorable no more, is His mercy clean gone forever, doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" then alike let the consoling reflection of the Psalmist comfort thee: "I said this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High, surely I will remember thy wonders of old." (Ps. lxxvii. 11.)

And thus, even as the Syro-Phenician woman entreated for her daughter, only redoubling our prayers the more He seems to repel us, at last His answer will show that all the while He meant to be gracious; and He will restore unto us the light of His countenance, and the joy of our salvation, and cheered in spirit, and with a light and tuneful heart we can resume our onward journey.

Beside the toilsome way,
Lonely and dark, by fruits and flowers unblest,
Which my worn feet tread sadly day by day,
Longing in vain for rest,

An angel softly walks,
With pale, sweet face, and eyes cast meekly down,
The while, from withered leaves and flowerless stalks,
She weaves my fitting crown.

And when my fainting heart
Desponds and mourns at its adverse fate,
Then quietly the angel's bright lips part,
Whispering softly, "Wait."

"Patience," she sweetly saith —
"The Father's mercies never come too late;
Gird thee with patient strength and trusting faith,
And firm endurance—Wait."

CHAPTER II.

TRUSTING TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

A DANGER of precisely another kind to that just treated of is the one now indicated. That arose from too low an estimate of our progress, this from too high a one. That was the danger of self-distrust, this the danger of self-sufficiency. Some new confessors are very easily

satisfied. As the ancient Jews rested in a false security because they were the children of Abraham—members of the covenant and numbered with the chosen people, and therefore would not come to a baptism of repentance and purifying of the heart; so is it with some now. They trust to their church membership. They think that since they have been baptized and confirmed, they have no more to do; they think if they but partake at the table of the Lord, they will receive the blessing, whether they come with or without faith, with or without devout preparation, and with or without discerning the body of the Lord.

Their religion is a form, their worship is a ceremony, their profession is a name. But can they think thus to deceive the All-seeing Eye? Do they imagine that eternal life can be secured by such empty, hollow services as these? Do they not know that God is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents" of men? Do they expect that He will be satisfied with an offering of words, while the heart is far from Him? Nay, rather is He not deeply offended by such frivolity? It is a dangerous affront to His holiness. Such conduct is a grievous tempting of infinite goodness. In no quicker way than this is our conscience seared and the Spirit quenched.

Be on thy guard, then, O young disciple, that

the sentence against the Church in Sardis be not thine: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (Rev. iii. 1.) Alas! how many professed followers of Jesus are in a most doubtful position to-day because of this very reason—*they trust to their church membership!* They have been reared in Christian families, and joined the Church as a matter of course, and their religion has become a mere habit. Its roots have not struck deep into the soil of their hearts. Their feelings are no more awake. They do not abide in the spirit.

Against this outward piety and want of the inward righteousness of faith, as shown in the Church of Rome, LUTHER thus warns: "Before men it is, indeed, fine, clean, beautiful cloth, a costly treasure and virtue, that you are no adulterer, no thief nor murderer, that you give alms, and are diligent in your office or calling; this we may praise in the world, and regard it as satin, silk, and gold. But when you come before God and His judgment, say, My best satin and gold are worse than tatters, therefore it is my highest joy and consolation that I be found not in my own righteousness, which is after the law, but in that which comes through faith in Christ."

And it is against this, even in the days of Protestantism, that the godly JOHN ARNDT thus

counsels: "That the Holy Gospel is subjected, in our age, to a great and shameful abuse, is fully proved by the ungodly and impenitent life of those who loudly boast of Christ and of His Word, while their unchristian life resembles that of persons who dwell in a land of heathens and not of Christians. I desire to show that we bear the name of *Christians*, not only because we ought to believe in Christ, but also because the name implies that we live in Christ, and that He lives in us. I further desire to show that true repentance proceeds from the inmost centre of the heart; that the heart, mind, and affections must be changed; that we must be conformed to Christ and His Holy Gospel, and that we must be renewed by the Word of God, and become new creatures."

O how different would the Church of Jesus be if every *confessor* were thus also a *follower* of Christ! If every one were really changed in heart, and penetrated by the influences and ruled by the power of the Holy Ghost! How many wounds would be saved to Zion! How much shame and dishonor to Christ would be put away! How blessed would be the family and communion of the saints on earth, if so many in it were not strangers to the real power of the Gospel and to the new life of grace!

Be not, then, overtaken by the snare of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, and of trusting to a correct outward profession. "But let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And ever look to thy heart, to thy walk, to thy inner life, and see to it that thou art also a member of the invisible Church, and that thy name is inscribed upon unfading tablets above.

CHAPTER III.

BACKSLIDING.

PERHAPS there is no Christian congregation in which there is not a certain class of members who are properly described by the term *backsliders*. They have relapsed from the faith. They have fallen, too, even from the outward semblance of piety. They come no more to partake of the Holy Supper. They are absent from the place where prayer is wont to be made. They are negligent about attendance upon church. And when they do hear the Word, they no longer take it like a burning coal to their inmost heart, to ponder and obey it.

They have also grown remiss in their private devotions; for he who will not worship God in public, need not try to draw near to Him in the closet. In fact, they have broken their holy baptismal vow. They have thrown down their cross. They have forsaken the Lord who bought them, and turned again to the "beggarly elements" of sin and folly. Like Demas, they "have loved this present world."

And what shall we say of such? Alas! theirs is a most dangerous situation! Having once "tasted of the good Word of God," and having been partakers of the heavenly calling, and having entered into the very Holy of Holies of Christianity, their conduct "crucifies the Lord afresh, and puts Him to an open shame." They are grieving the Holy Ghost. They are committing the unpardonable sin for which there is "neither forgiveness in this world nor in that to come." They are "tempting God."

No excuse either is to be made for them. It is true they try to satisfy their consciences, but their excuses are but the inventions of their desires,—only a weak artifice of guilt,—which God will utterly expose in the last day. Under no possible pretext can the person who has once given his heart to his Maker, afterwards take it back. But when we relapse, it is simply our careless

negligence that prompts us; or we are enticed by the love of the world; or we are resolved to immolate our souls at the idol of pleasure and sense. Nor can anyone deceive himself with the thought that he can just abandon his churchly duties, and thereby set himself free from all his holy obligations.

For the covenant once entered into, and sealed by Baptism and Confirmation, and by the Body and Blood of the Lord, can never be annulled with the consent of the great I AM. But it continues to bind even while you are disowning it and trampling it under foot. And every moment that you remain a backslider, your sin grows deeper.

If, then, Heavenward pilgrim, you have gone a few times to communion, and then ceased to walk with your fellow-confessors, there is but one thing for you to do. Any other course will certainly ruin your soul. That is, at once to return to the bosom of the Church, to renew your vows and to endeavor to walk again in the Spirit.

"Remember Lot's wife." When she but looked behind to the goodly though wicked land she had left, the jealous Almighty made her a monument of warning to coming ages. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke ix. 62.)

What unutterable woe would pierce your spirit, as, in the realm of the lost, you beheld afar off the very same company with which you had set out on your good beginning, holding their harps, and singing and triumphing upon the heavenly Mount of Zion!

O that you may be saved from this mournful, this melancholy, and this reproachful fate, viz., that of being a backslider from the faith and from the congregation of Israel! Never, then, yield to the tempter when he suggests to you to return to the broad path of sin you have left behind. But at once reply, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" and with a more trembling firmness than before, stand by the public confession of your Master in the Church.

CHAPTER IV.

BESETTING SINS.

BESETTING sins are the weak points in the pilgrim's armor, whereat the shafts of the evil One most often enter. They are the unguarded gates by which the citadel is surprised and taken. It is by our conduct in regard to

them, too, that our piety is proved. It is not calm weather, but a storm that tests the capacity of a vessel. The ship that can only live in smooth seas, and under clear skies, is a perilous bark in which to try the treacherous ocean. And so, if the Christian disciple fails when his besetting sins assail him, then he can be fully assured that he is not safely on the way to heaven. He will never reach the goal.

And yet, to master our besetting sins, is always a supreme trial. Here is the crisis-point of our conflict. Oh what grace then does not the Christian need, to give him the victory over these lusts of the flesh!

A golden rule is that of the Saviour: "Enter not into temptation." It is far easier to resist the beginnings of evil. Sin, at its very fountain-head, may be quenched like a mere spark, but suffered to advance only a little, soon it is a universal conflagration, and no power can stay it. Resolutely then, check the first evil thought, the first guilty affection. Look to thy Lord transfixed upon the Cross, and remember how He was crucified to all earthly joys for thee; and pray for divine, helping grace? Remember that the same reproachful eye that He once turned upon fallen Peter, now looks mournfully upon thee, and for thy love to Him put back the temptation, and give no

"occasion to the enemies of the cross to blaspheme." And may thy language be:

Oh! ever as the tempter spoke, and feeble nature's fears,
Wrung drop by drop the scalding flow of unavailing tears,
I wrestled down the evil thoughts, and strove in silent prayer
To feel, oh Helper of the weak! that Thou indeed wert there.

If hitherto thou hast been vanquished, it has been because "thou hast not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." But if thou dost so resist, the promise is, that "the devil will flee from thee." If he is opposed by the word of God, (the weapon used by the Saviour when Satan had the boldness even to tempt Him), if he finds the conscience vigilant and armed against him; he is a great coward, and immediately he flies, smitten with trembling and astonishment.

And then "angels will come and minister unto thee." They will crown thee with the approval of thy Lord, whose wakeful eye has not been unobservant of thy hot contest. And then, thou wilt feel how sweeter far is the joy of "keeping under the body and bringing it into subjection," than of allowing thy soul to be a "castaway," in order that thou mayest pluck the "bitter apples of Sodom." "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us." (Heb. xii. 1.)

Our besetting sins are as various as are human temperaments. With one it is pride; with another temper; with another selfishness; with another carnal affections; with another envy; with another backsliding, and scattering dissensions in the church or among companions. But rightly managed and controlled, these besetting temptations can be made of great benefit to us. They are alarm-bells, which point out to us where our danger lies. They acquaint us with ourselves. They show us our weakness and our needs.

And if then, surprised by their strength, we are led to betake ourselves closer to God—to examine again the foundations of our piety—to polish and sharpen our gospel armor, and to have our conversation and citizenship more than ever in heaven; our weaknesses will become to us the means to greater conquests in grace; and issuing forth from their onset "more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us," our joyful song will be, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." (Prov. xviii. 10.)

CHAPTER V.

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

THE journey Heavenward, thus beset by enemies and dangers, is, in truth, a Warfare. He who enters upon it must feel that he enlists as a soldier. His campaign is to reach the heights of salvation. His captain is Jesus. His banner is the Cross. His defensive armor is, "the Shield of Faith, with which he quenches the fiery darts of the wicked." His aggressive weapon is, "the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit," with which he scatters terror into the ranks of the enemy. His foes are, "the world, the flesh, and the devil." He has himself first to conquer, and the rebellious camp of his own unruly desires and tempers to set in order. He has to vanquish the world, with its soft arts and treacheries. And he has the devil, that old serpent, the Prince of Darkness, to cast down, as it is written, Ephes. vi. 11: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand *against the wiles of the devil.*"

This warfare ceases not until the grave. Even the holiest men of old and of all times, have had their hot and trying conflicts. Moses and David

were sometimes taken captive by the old Enemy, and were afterwards overwhelmed with shame and regret at their weakness. Paul speaks sorely of the sharp struggle that rages within him: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom. vii. 22, 23.)

It is idleness and ease that weaken the soldier and render him powerless in the time of battle. And just so is it with the Christian pilgrim; that when he enters upon his warfare, he must expect to encounter hardships, and to make sacrifices, and not to pamper himself with indulgence and ease. St. Paul, therefore, thus counsels the Christian hosts as they are marching on to King Immanuel's land: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." And, again: "This charge I commit unto thee, that thou mightest war a good WARFARE." And it is also enjoined: "Thou therefore endure hardness as *a good soldier* of Jesus Christ."

It is said of a certain eminent Christian, that "his history shows the right way to success. He sought it as a resolute soldier seeks a victory in a siege or battle, or as a man that runs a race for

a great prize. God help every soldier of the cross on earth to pursue the same course." "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephes. vi. 12.)

O, then, young Christian soldier, quit thee like a man in this holy warfare! Thou dost not go a warring at thine own charges, but at the command of King Immanuel, the Lord of Sabaoth and the God of battles. And though thy foes be strong, and thy dangers be many, and thy conflicts be sharp and trying, yet He will be near to whisper to thy soul: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I the Lord Thy God will hold thy right hand, saying, I will help thee." Yea! when the foe comes against thee like a whirlwind, resist him with the defiance of that heroic warrior of the cross, MARTIN LUTHER, when he cried, "Though they kindle a fire whose flames reach up to heaven, yea! though there be as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the houses, yet, because I have been called, will I enter that city;"—or when he sang:

With might of ours can nought be done,
Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the Valiant One,
Whom God Himself elected.

Ask ye who is this?
Jesus Christ it is,
Of Sabaoth Lord;
And there's none other God;
He holds the field forever.

Though devils all the world should fill,
All watching to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They cannot overpower us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none;
He's judged, the deed is done,
One little word o'erthrows him.

March, then, through this world as a stranger to its enticing joys, as one who has a hard race to run,—a sharp battle to fight,—a stubborn foe to subdue; and keep thine eye fixed upon thy heavenly prize, and ever girding on thy gospel armor, put down weakness and temptation, and a victor shalt thou come out at last, and the crown of the faithful soldier shall be thine forever.

SECTION II.

Helps.

AS there are foes and dangers confronting the young pilgrim, so there are also *helps* to assist him Heavenward. When the great Syrian host encompassed Elisha, his servant's heart quailed; but the prophet's eye beheld the surrounding mountain full of horses and chariots of fire sent by heaven for his defence, and thereupon he addressed his trembling servant: "Fear not, for they that be with us are *more* than they that be with them." (2 Kings vi. 16.) And so it is with the Christian soldier, that his friends are more than his enemies, his weapons are stronger than theirs, and his helps are mightier than his dangers. All that he needs is for his eyes to be opened in order to see them. To these, for his comfort and defence, we now, therefore, direct him.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEANS OF GRACE: THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS.

NUMEROUS are the helps which God has given us to awaken us from sleep and from relapse, and to quicken us in holiness; but so far above all others stand the Word and Sacraments that they are called, by way of eminence, *The Means* of Grace. That is, as the rounds are the means by which we climb a ladder, or as the steps are the means by which we ascend a stair, such are the Word and Sacraments. They are the vessels through which we drink of the life-giving stream of grace. As the cup is not the water, but is needed that we may drink the water, so is it with the Word and Sacraments. They are not the grace itself, but without them, as cups or vessels to hold and convey the grace, we cannot have it.

This makes it easy, also, to understand the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, which is not a mere *symbol* of grace, but a *means* of grace. The bread and the wine are not as the Romanists say, the literal Body and Blood of Christ,—

are not the sacramental grace itself,—but they are the means, the vessels, through which that sacramental grace comes, and through which is received by us the true Body and Blood of the Lord. The means are not the thing itself, as Romanists say, neither are the Body and Blood separated from the means as some others would say; but the true doctrine is that the sacramental grace is supernaturally connected with the means, which remain simply, and purely, and only, bread and wine, and yet through which our Lord's most precious Body and Blood are truly offered and received. Thus we do not violate the testimony of our senses, neither do we take from the Sacrament all that makes it unutterably dear, holy, mysterious, and strengthening to the soul.

Consider, then, THE WORD. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth,—Thy Word is Truth," said the Saviour. That is, the great means of sanctification, of growth in the new life, and of walk in the Spirit, is the Word of God. It is the sole spring of regeneration. "From a child," said Paul to his young friend, Timothy, "thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." "Search the Scriptures" is the great law for him who seeks after eternal life.

It is through God's Word that the Holy Ghost

awakens us when dead in trespasses and sins; enlightens our understanding; inflames our love; reproves our shortcomings; and feeds, nourishes, and sustains the new life. "Thou shalt be nourished up in the words of faith and of *good doctrine*," said the holy apostle.

O that Christians would prize more the Word, and that they would seek more to be rooted and grounded in the *pure doctrine*. "Other foundation than this can no man lay." Having itching ears, turning to fables, and *seeking after this and that new thing*, are the cause that the piety of many is mere hay, wood, stubble, to be devoured by the fiery test; or chaff, to be swept away by the first storm of temptation; or grass, which springeth up on the rock, but having no root in itself, withers away.

"The great need of modern Christianity is the *meditative* spirit." Every one talks of works, of activity, of Christian enterprise, of successful arts in popularizing the Church, and conforming it to worldly taste in order to draw the crowd; but of deep, calm piety,—unseen communion with God,—devout feeding upon the Word,—growing up to Christlike manhood by meditation upon the profound and sublime mysteries of faith, there is quite too little. The leaves are green, while the worm is feeding upon the heart.

Be not, then, young pilgrim, like these, but "as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk *of the Word*, that ye may grow thereby." And thus shall your house be built upon a rock, and your anchor struck far down into the deeps of eternal truth, and the very waves of hell shall not prevail against you.

Along with the Word, and borne by it, are the HOLY SACRAMENTS. As the other is a spoken Word, so these are a visible Word. That addresses itself to the ear, these to the sense of sight and touch. In the Word we hear, but in the Holy Sacraments we see and "taste that the Lord is gracious." (1 Peter ii. 2.)

As Holy Baptism is the sacrament of *regeneration*, so the Holy Communion is the sacrament to which the believer goes for *renewal.* The former admits us into, the latter sustains us upon, the Christian pilgrimage.

Holy Baptism, (and its attendant Confirmation,) accordingly is administered but once; but the Holy Communion is celebrated over and over again, as often as the Church thinks it judicious for our renewal, and comfort, and upbuilding in grace. The sincere seeker for life will, therefore, most faithfully improve this golden means. He will thank God for every opportunity to feed anew upon its precious nourishment for his inner

life. Every time that he partakes of the Holy Communion he will feel strengthened in faith, quickened in zeal, renewed in love and hope. But the neglect of it, or the careless celebration thereof, will weaken and soon destroy his religious life. "For this cause" (improper dealing with the Communion), said St. Paul to the Christians of Corinth, "many are *weak and sickly* among you and many sleep." (1 Cor. xi. 30.)

It is often a matter of painful surprise to pastors, how professors of Christ can show the indifference they do to these great Means of Grace—the Word and the Holy Communion. They are careless in their attendance upon church, and every little obstacle keeps them at home, showing how little they live upon the *Word* as their daily food. More than half the seasons of *Holy Communion*, though not as frequent as desirable, they miss, showing how little they prize this feast of renewal.

No wonder, then, that their piety is a feeble and sickly plant. Let it, then, beloved disciple of Jesus, above all things else, be the chief *help* upon which you rely; the chief ladder by which you ascend the heights of spiritual life, to diligently lay hold upon THE MEANS of Grace —THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS. By their regular and faithful use will you be devel-

oped in that sound, humble, quiet, enduring, and effective piety, which, most of all, God loves.

CHAPTER II.

PRAYER.

PRAYER is the eye of faith turned upward to gaze on the unseen. It is the pause of the soul from worldly pursuits to commune with its God. It is a return of the spirit, wearied by earthly anxiety and care, to rest upon the bosom of its Father and Maker, and to be renewed again for the battles and toils of time. Prayer is the life-breath of the Christian. By its aid he feeds upon heavenly manna, and is nourished by the spiritual meat and drink of angels. The place of prayer is one of the holiest, safest, and most blessed spots upon earth. While bowed before the mercy-seat, no danger can harm us. The seasons that we spend in prayer are those in which we dwell near to heaven, and which will be the least regretted and the most happily remembered in a dying hour.

Prayer is a glorious privilege. It is surpassing condescension that the eternal Jehovah should be

a Hearer and Answerer of prayer. That to the pious heart every spot of earth becomes a temple, in which we may find God and talk with Him, and receive an impartation of His blessing. Prayer is one of the most precious *helps* of the Christian. It is the hand that takes hold upon the Hand that moves the world.

> The Devil trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees.

We are never stronger than when we rise from prayer; the tempter is never farther from us; and our souls never feel more as if they breathed the morning air of heaven, and were mightily renewed for running well the Christian race.

Prayer is a precious means of piety. Continuing "instant in prayer," begets the Christian temper. Ever communing with Christ, an image of His pure Spirit is formed within us. From prayer, flow meekness, faith, self-consecration, and courage to be crucified in the work of the Lord. Prayer baptizes the Christian with that dew of heaven which fertilizes his whole nature with the breath of God. No one, then, who daily and fervently prays will ever be seen relapsing from grace. But his course in piety will be onward and upward.

The holiest men have ever been the most dili-

gent in prayer. The patriarch Jacob wrestled in prayer with the Holy One at Penuel until the break of day, saying, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me. *And he blessed him there.*" Moses prayed so fervently that he even asked God to blot his name out of His book, unless he would answer, and at last the Almighty yielded, and granted what He had before refused. The Psalms of David are but the breathings of his prayers. And so far and rapt was the flight of his Faith in prayer, that her wing even carried him over unborn ages, until he beheld the glorious vision of the future Messiah of the world.

But above all, what a life of prayer was that of CHRIST! Tried by the contradiction of sinners, He begins His career by spending a whole night in prayer. His mightiest miracle at the grave of Lararus was not performed until He had turned His heart upward in prayer, and asked the Holy Father to glorify Him before men. It was, too, in the stillness of Gethsemane, just before His sharp agony on the cross, that He prayed so earnestly that His sweat, falling like great drops of blood, reddened and hallowed the ground. And His last expiring cry, as his soul in death took that awful leap into eternity, was the prayer: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

And how was the beloved Luther distinguished

as a man of prayer! We are astonished that amid his press of duties he could daily find several hours for the holy calm of prayer. What a moving prayer was that one on record which nerved him for his heroic but dangerous confession at Worms! It was wonderful, indeed, how this holy man talked and pleaded with God, even as one would speak with a friend.

And how, then, can the young disciple expect to be preserved in the midst of so many dangers, without daily and fervent resort to the throne of grace? "Watch and pray," was the Master's great command. Prayer is the sentinel which guards on the watch-towers of the Christian, and keeps him awakened and vigilant against the approach of every disguised artifice of the old Enemy.

It is the Spirit that teaches us how to pray aright. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." It is the one who is baptized with the Holy Ghost, and in whom the Spirit abides, who can ask for those things which are best for him, and who can so make intercession for them that God cannot refuse.

But we must also pray like the Saviour, "Not

my will but Thine, O God, be done." "No *good* thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly." But He will withhold that which He knows not to be for our good, even if we pray ever so earnestly for it. He often, too, refuses us for the present, that He may but answer our prayers in a different, a larger, and a better way than in the precise form and manner we had wished. And we must not be rash, then, to doubt His goodness, or to accuse His faithfulness to His holy promises.

Let, then, the pilgrim often resort to the mercy-seat if he would have grace to press forward upon the way of life. There is no more beautiful and hopeful scene for the young confessor than when his protecting angel hastens to the presence of God with the joyful tidings, "Behold he prayeth." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not faint." Like David, then, morning, evening, and at noon,—yea! in the silent night watches, and in the busy and crowded day,—ever let thy spirit ascend to thy Maker in prayer, and He will draw near to bless thee and to "give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Frequent closet prayer, and regular public worship in the assembly of God's people, will be a mighty *help* to

thee in thy journey heavenward, and never neglecting, but conscientiously and fervently attending to this holy and delightful duty, thy love and zeal will know no relapse.

When is the time for prayer?
With the first beams that light the morning sky,
Ere for the toils of day thou dost prepare,
Lift up thy thoughts on high:
Commend thy footsteps to His watchful care:
Morn is the time for prayer.

And when the stars come forth—
When to the trusting heart sweet hopes are given,
And the deep stillness of the hour gives birth
To pure, bright dreams of heaven;
Kneel to thy God—ask strength life's ills to bear;
Night is the time for prayer.

When is the time for prayer?
In *every hour* while life is spared to thee;
In crowds or solitude, in joy or care,
Thy thoughts should HEAVENWARD flee,
At home, at noon and eve, with loved ones there,
Bend thou the knee in PRAYER.

CHAPTER III.

DEVOTION TO THE CHURCH.

THE Holy Christian and Apostolic Church—the organized community of them that believe—is the BODY OF CHRIST. That is, it is

that visible form through which He lives and moves upon the earth, and unites the believers to Himself as members thereof, and sustains them by the impartation of His grace. Just as the spirit of man must have a body in which to work and manifest itself, so Christianity can alone flourish in the Church. There can be no true, healthy piety without churchliness. For the flower of religion, in its loveliest grace, blooms alone under the shadow of the altars of Zion, whence issue forth, abundantly watering its roots, those crystal fountains of life, the pure Gospel and Holy Sacraments. The Church is the very kingdom of grace, in which all the appointed means and instrumentalities and helps upon the HEAVENWARD path, abound in plentiful and glorious profusion.

A deep DEVOTION, then, to the visible Church, a due veneration for those outward marks and rites and symbols by which she is shadowed forth in earthly form, and a lively and solemn appreciation of the importance of churchly obligations and duties, are at once the characteristics and the safeguards of true piety. The loss of the form will soon be followed by the destruction of the spirit. When churchliness is once disdained, Christianity itself will soon be rejected. When the visible Church is once destroyed, men will

look in vain for the invisible. It is impossible to kill the Body of Christ without also wounding HIM. Those who claim to be advocates of Christianity, and yet oppose the Church, are, even though they may not so mean it, the most subtle and dangerous of all the enemies of the kingdom of truth.

The true believer will, then, see in the Church the Lord's mystical body; and in her communion he will find hallowed intercourse with his Saviour; and as her holy ordinances, and seasons, and assemblies, fill him with devout rapture, he will exclaim with the Psalmist: "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord!" The welfare of Zion will be inexpressibly dear to him, her wounds will cause his heart to bleed, and her prosperity and her joy will make his soul leap with gladness.

For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my prayers and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.

Beyond my highest joy,
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.

As "Christ loved the Church and gave Him-

self for it;" and as the early believers brought their all and laid it at the apostles' feet, so will the interests of the Church be precious to the loving disciple as the apple of his eye. His meditations, his prayers, and his devisings, will be how he can advance her progress, how he can make strong her bulwarks, beautify her palaces and enlarge her borders. No tribute will be too costly to express his affections, no labor will be too hard for his devotion, no sacrifice will exhaust his love.

Such attachment as this to the Church it is which discloses the temper that "has forsaken all and followed HIM." And it is the faithful band who are known by this pure and single devotion, who stand by the Church in her need and want and trial, as well as in her palmy and peaceful days, who are found at their places in all times and seasons, who bare their own bosoms to every rude onset and cruel reverse, rather than that the Bride of Christ should suffer, who uphold the hands and cheer the hearts of her ministering servants, it is these who are the pillars of the Church on earth; it is these by whom the kingdom of God moves forward to the glorious day of its universal empire; and it is these whose names in the shining foundations of the New Jerusalem above shall be written beneath those of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

One of the most dangerous defects of modern Christianity has been the *decline of reverence for the visible Church*, an undervaluing of the ordinances thereof as helps to piety, an effort to break that union of Spirit and Nature, of Word and Sacrament, of Grace and Means, which is the very essence of Christianity ; and it is one of the most hopeful signs of the times that a great revival of churchly piety is making steady progress throughout the Christian world.

Your devotion to the Church of Christ must be shown to her *in that department with which in the Providence of God you are connected.* This will not prevent you from having a large and gentle charity toward the sincere children of God in other ecclesiastical households. But a charity so broad as to lead you to have no distinctive preference for your mother Church, in which you were baptized, and in which your parents lived and died, is like the son who does not honor and prefer his own parents, or like the citizen who has no patriotic preference for his own country ; and is therefore a mistaken charity, and most deleterious to usefulness in the Church. For it is when thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines of your own Church, and with those aspects in which it excelleth in glory, that you will most ardently love and cherish and labor for

it; and that your Devotion to the Church of Christ will attain the greatest height and depth. Let every believer, then, be intelligently grounded in the distinctive faith for which his own Church witnesses and contends.

A distinguished feature of our Church is its love for THE PURE FAITH OF GOD'S WORD. No other Church so much prizes the very letter of the Truth; and recognizes so greatly the all-importance of laying securely the foundation for the superstructure of piety. It cherishes unity indeed, and sets large store upon practical religious activity; but it loves and prizes and esteems the truth more. It holds that true conversion, and true piety, and true church progress, pre-eminently depend upon *true doctrine*. It would not make the stem to be more essential than the root, or place the stream above its source. It therefore relies not so much upon human skill and upon adept measures, as it does upon the great, divine, life-generating cause, viz., the Word of God in its simple, pure, natural meaning. With it the wisdom of man is foolishness, but "the *Gospel* is the power of God unto salvation," and the humbler and the more insignificant the means, the greater is the glory of Him who worketh as He will.

With the Lutheran Church, therefore, the

fundamental point is to have a correct confession of faith, to *accept the Word in child-like humility as it is written;* not pruning it of its most glorious mysteries in order to fit it to the narrow walls of our reason; but the greater the mystery, the greater our adoring joy at the unsearchable riches and the limitless pasture-fields of grace. Where the pure Word is esteemed so precious a treasure, and where the first duty is thus to meditate deeply upon the Scriptures, so as to preach and feed upon their saving substance, the *rites, ceremonies, and peculiar type* of outward form are naturally viewed as secondary, and a matter of Christian liberty. Our Church, therefore, while deeming subscription to the Augsburg Confession of Faith, the great creed of regenerated Christendom, as essential, and while recognizing the great value of uniformity in modes of worship, yet tolerates, as matters of human expediency, *various forms of church government*, and diversified orders of service.

Again: Our Church is eminent for a RICH DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SACRAMENTS. While separating them from all Romish and carnal errors, as that of the *ex opere operato* doctrine, viz., that the Sacraments are efficacious by their mere outward celebration without faith—or that of Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, or any

similar heresy; we do hold that the Sacraments are not mere empty *signs*, but that they are *means* of grace. That the water, the bread, and the wine are the earthen vessels through which the heavenly treasure is borne, even as a pitcher holds and conveys water without being that water, or as a printed letter holds the precious commodity of truth, without being itself confounded with that truth.

Thus we avoid that idolatry which would make the earthy to be heavenly, but we do not lose our hold on the glorious mystery of the Sacraments as the means of conveying precious and heavenly grace, viz., in Baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and in the Holy Communion, the gift of the Body and Blood of the Lord. For if we can believe that the chainless eternal Spirit is given through a printed letter, or through articulated sound striking upon the ear, or that the Holy Ghost is given through simple water, because God's Word declares it, assuredly it is no harder to believe, upon the very same authority, that Christ may be given to dwell in us, and strengthen us, through simple bread and wine.

Our Church, again, sanctioned by the universal belief and practice of the Apostolic Church, holds firmly to INFANT BAPTISM, and believing that the coming of Christ has not narrowed but widened

the stream of grace, cannot think that, while Jewish children were members of the covenant by circumcision, the birth of the Messiah as a babe would cast children out of the covenant in which they were before. Consequently, she ever prizes the words of Christ, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God;" and she enjoins all pious parents to be faithful in this great duty, and not to despise the baptismal grace offered their children, but to bring them early and consecrate them to God at the altar of Holy Baptism.

Our Church, again, advocates CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION of the young, as the best means of leading to a public confession of Christ in the Church. This practice, which is of the highest antiquity,—the early Church forming the young into three graded classes of catechumens, and preparing them by a course of instruction of from two to three years,—the Lutheran Church resumed with great zeal at the era of the Reformation, and has ever continued since. In experience, it endures the test far better than any modern plan. Whereas, in churches resorting to hasty admission, founded upon sudden excitement, relapse is the rule and perseverance the exception, with us it is just the reverse. We receive a smaller number, but we retain the more in the end. Neither

is the field of Christianity thereby strewn with the melancholy wrecks of souls, who began, unfitted by good, sound doctrine, the Christian race, but who, by a more judicious preparation of careful training, might have been eternally saved.

The distinction sometimes noted between Roman Catholic and Protestant countries, that in the latter fewer men are found in the Church, is chiefly owing to this cause—the rejection of that catechetical training of youth which wins them to Christ before their habits and tempers are formed and hardened by intercourse with society and the temptations of the world. That this distinction is owing to catechisation is seen likewise by the much larger proportion of men found in the German, Swedish, and Norwegian (where this system so largely prevails), than in the English, churches.

Our Church thus prefers careful instruction and a quiet profession, with permanent results and deeds that speak trumpet-toned, to a loud profession, followed by a life barren of Christian works, like the fig-tree denounced by our Saviour for blooming with verdant leaves while it bore no fruit. And, by a glorious and unprecedented progress, has God blessed these efforts in our Church, rich in faith and sacrifice, but marked by a deep and orderly piety, which was proof against all the arts of modern sensationalism, and never

compromised the pure name and dignity of the cause of Christ to attract the gaze of the world.

CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP is also a highly prized feature of the Lutheran Church. To us it seems a great inconsistency that some churches should acknowledge the value of *congregational singing*, but then oppose this same congregational feature of religious service *when extended to the prayers and to the whole worship of God by His people.* We believe that true worship is only such where, like in the temple service at Jerusalem, or like in the glimpses of heavenly worship given us in the Apocalypse, it is participated in by all. Hence the value of a Common Service as well as of a Common Hymnal.

Consequently, our worship is responsive and congregational. In the prayers, in the singing, in the confession, in the opening and in the conclusion, all share a part; and a rich and holy fervor is thus given to the religious emotions, which they would lose if repressed and stifled within the bosom. Our Church, however, while clinging most ardently to this principle of the congregation unitedly engaging in public worship, shrinks most guardedly from any the least abuse of it, disclosing a tendency toward that both impious and frivolous extreme called *Ritualism.* Our service is but founded upon nature, to

help and to call it forth. The voice assists the heart, and it is when both soul and body praise the Lord, and all within us join to magnify His name, that the wave of Christian enthusiasm reaches the highest possible point upon earth; yea! rolls up to the very throne of God.

Thus, too, is there a rich, hearty fervor in Lutheran piety; a childlike joyousness; a liberty in the Lord temperately to use all His gifts; a love of Christian Art employed as a minister to aid religion; a belief in the unconditioned universality of the offer of saving grace, and an adoring trust in *justification through faith* alone; that causes us to thank God that the lines have fallen to us within her blest communion. Let no one, then, falter in his devotion to the Church which Providence has made his spiritual mother.

Let her children in the faith remember her great *history*, for by her the Reformation was begun and fought to its glorious issue, and the pure faith rescued from what had almost proved its grave. And as she is the Mother Church of the Reformation, so is she far greater and stronger than any of her most flourishing daughters. She is in truth the Church of "tongues," she alone praises God in every language of civilization, she has more kings and princes and nations, and is larger numerically than all other evangelical

churches together. And in her hands most probably is the sceptre of the destinies of Christendom,—she is the Church of the future.

We close this interesting theme with the appended testimonies to our Church from divines belonging to other Protestant communions.

The Rev. Mr. Goodwin (Congregationalist), writes thus, in the *Christian Union*, of the "Service of Song," as it impressed him in the Lutheran churches in Europe: "The influence of the great reformer, LUTHER, is felt as an almost palpable presence in all the churches called by his name. His spirit breathes in all the hymns that are sung, many of which were composed by him; and his theology animates the whole worship, not less than the preaching and confession of the Lutheran Church. In entering one of these churches, after habitual attendance upon those of Calvinistic faith and worship, one feels that he has come into a milder and more genial atmosphere, where the icy points that stand out clear and sharp in the Alpine air of Calvinism have become softened and melted down by the heat and glow proceeding from the heart of the great reformer; and the glacial system of theology has been converted into fertilizing streams that flow together under the harmonizing and rhythmic power of song."

And that eminent Reformed divine, Rev. Philip Schaff, D.D., also says : " The Lutheran piety has its peculiar charm, the charm of Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. . . . It has a rich, inward life. It excels in honesty, kindness, affection, cheerfulness, and that '*Gemüthlichkeit*' for which other nations have not even a name. The Lutheran Church meditated over the deepest mysteries of Divine grace, and brought to light many treasures of knowledge from the mines of revelation. She can point to an unbroken succession of learned divines, who devoted their whole life to the investigation of saving truth. She numbers her mystics who bathed in the ocean of infinite love. She has sung the most fervent hymns to the Saviour, and holds sweet, childlike intercourse with the heavenly Father."

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOLY FESTIVALS.

THE principle of observing certain days and seasons as religious festivals rests upon an analogy to the appointments of Jehovah in the Old Testament. He specified several periods to

be annually set apart as seasons to be devoted entirely to religion. Such were: the Feasts of Passover, of Pentecost, of Tabernacles, and the Great Sabbath of Atonement. These were called "holy convocations" unto the Lord, in which all work was to cease; and when, at the sounding of the silver trumpets, the congregation of Israel assembled for devotion. They were principally based upon great historic events in the wondrous dealings of Jehovah with His people, and upon important religious truths, the calling of which to mind was meant to awaken the slumbering flame of piety.

So illustrious, then, is the original, of which our Christian Festivals are a type. If God had so distinguished His goodness to the Jews that they must have annual commemorations of these gracious acts, much more did the early Christians feel called upon to set apart festive seasons to celebrate and keep alive in grateful memory those marvelous displays of grace, which the day of light and of the revelation of the Messiah had brought to their eyes.

The "Three High Festivals" of Christianity are Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. Each of these is properly a cycle, including attendant seasons. Thus, in connection with Christmas, are Advent and Epiphany; with

Easter are Lent, Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and, pre-eminently, Good Friday; and Whitsuntide is preceded by Ascension Day and followed by Trinity Sunday.

Of these three, EASTER and WHITSUNTIDE are the most ancient Festivals. These, indeed, from the early references to them, were evidently celebrated from the very beginning. The death and resurrection of Christ naturally exerted so profound and thrilling an impression upon the early disciples that they could not forget that Great Week upon its return, and as Holy Thursday was touchingly remembered by celebrating the Holy Communion which the Master had instituted upon the night of His betrayal, it was impossible that the day of His crucifixion, GOOD FRIDAY, and the wondrous morning when He triumphed over the tomb, EASTER, could be forgotten. So also with his final Ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at the Feast of Pentecost, by which the believers were born again and strengthened and comforted for their perils and trials, and the youthful Church started upon its great future career.

Thus, too, CHRISTMAS, which was not instituted until as late as the fourth century, and which was unanimously fixed by the ancient Church upon the 25th of December (and therefore evi-

dently not without some high legendary authority conclusive to the fathers), soon rose to such eminence, and the churches were so lavishly decorated and so thronged with worshippers, that St. Chrysostom calls it the "Mother of all the Festivals," for on it was shed the mystic spell of that holiest night of time, when the Word became incarnate, and an angelic chorus floating down upon the plains of Bethlehem, announced that the long-promised Messiah was born in the manger, and that "God had visited His people."

The Holy Festivals, those "wreathed pillars of the Christian year," are the true *revival seasons* of the Church. Nothing has a greater tendency to stimulate devotion than the setting apart of special seasons, in which worldly duties are to be largely forgotten, and the soul withdrawn to the contemplation of religion, to holy meditations, and to the interests of the kingdom of God. To meet this pious inclination have the Festivals been appointed, and they are superior to all modern special seasons in many respects, but chiefly in these, that they are based upon, and call to mind in a lively manner, the greatest, most thrilling and instructive facts in the *history and work of Christ*, and also, that celebrating them, we keep up that *bond of unity with the*

believers of all time and the Church in all ages, which is so beautiful and holy.

How indescribably hallowed, thus, are these holy seasons to the fervent Christian heart, as, with the Church throughout the world, and with the fellowship of the believers in all past time looking down upon him, he goes upon the same day and hour of the year to the cradle at Bethlehem to adore the infant Lord; or stands with weeping love at the foot of the Holy Cross; or, with unutterable joy, gazes upon the riven sepulchre on Easter's blessed morn.

Thus in succession the Church Year leads us along the path of the appearing, the suffering, and the triumphing Redeemer, that we may hail Him in His several offices as Prophet, Priest, and King. And then comes the longer Trinity season, in which we are reminded of the *fruits* of the Christian life, which all these moving truths should now bring forth in us.

The pious and devout celebration of these Holy Festivals the youthful pilgrim will find a most precious *help* on his way HEAVENWARD! By them will his love to Jesus be quickened, his unworthiness be reproved, his perhaps broken vows, made on Palm Sunday or Whitsuntide, be remembered, and his lukewarm piety be revived to new ardor and strength. The Holy

Festivals are the oases,—bright spots of green and flowers where living fountains break forth,—in the pilgrimage of the Christian Race. There, then, let every young pilgrim refresh his fainting zeal and his relaxing vigor, and pressing forward again with renewed energy, "thank God and take courage."

CHAPTER V.

WALKING IN THE STEPS OF THE FATHERS: THE PRIMITIVE OR APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

THE remark of the Grecian philosopher, Plato, that the "ancients being nearer to the gods than the moderns, therefore were better acquainted with the divine will," applies with peculiar aptness to the early times of Christianity. The era of Christ's personal tabernacling upon the earth is the noonday of truth. Then the moral Sun shone in its fullest splendor, and the Day of Grace was at its meridian brightness. All ages before looked *forward* to the Sun of Truth, but all ages since must look *backward* to that glorious Orb; for Christ is the centre of all history, whom the ages cannot progress away

from, but about whom they must eternally revolve.

Consequently, the Primitive or Apostolic Church—*i. e.*, the Church during the first century and earliest years succeeding to Christ—must be the model of the Church in all coming time. This was the ideal epoch of Christianity. Then the rays of the setting Sun of Truth yet lingered on the horizon; the apostles, who were miraculously endowed and had been personally taught by Christ, yet lived, or were well remembered by many pious fathers who had walked with them, and many traditions of the sayings of Christ, and of the decisions of the apostles, were preserved. "This period," therefore, "contains that basis of the whole development of the Church, to which whatever was of later origin attached itself as a mere accident of it,"* and its study the Christian will find one of his most useful *helps.*

Never can age dim the lustre of this era. But the older grows the Past of Christianity, the brighter shine the examples of the pious apostolic fathers, and the greener become the leaves of their eternal youth. The Christian's eye ought often, then, to turn backward to study the Church in her primitive glory. Let us not al-

* Guericke's Manual of the Ancient Church.

ways, like the foolish Athenians whom Paul reproved, "spend our time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing," but with reverence sit at the feet of the august Past, and learn deep and cautious wisdom for the future.

Writes RUSKIN: "They are the weakest minded and hardest hearted who most love variety and change. The generations, as they pass, do not carve their work in snow that will melt, but each and all are rolling a great, white, gathering snowball—higher and higher, larger and larger—along the Alps of human power." And says President WOODROW WILSON: "The old things of art and taste and thought and religion are the permanent things. We know that they are, because they have lasted long enough to grow old."

The apostle reminds us that we are those "on whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Cor. x. 11.) And we who thus live "in the foremost files of time," sit at the feet of the ages, and should drink in the lore of their wisdom.

The laity, and some clergy even, of modern times, should be far better acquainted with the primitive Church. Too little is known of it, and this is one chief cause of that fitful, superficial Christianity which so largely prevails.

Nothing perhaps, then, can be a more valu-

able instruction and *help* to the Christian than to view a meagre outline of the Church in its apostolic simplicity, purity, and splendor.

Such a brief sketch, therefore, of the characteristics of the Church in its early and golden age, we here attempt to draw for the pious reader's eye.

1. *Separation from the World.* While asceticism,—after the teaching and example of Christ,—was opposed, worldly amusements, pursuits, and cares, were looked upon as dangers as to which a Christian should be on his guard; and the Christian life was generally regarded as a race, a warfare, and a self-denying bearing of the cross of Christ. A Christian was to be in and with the world, and yet not of it.

2. *Joy in Martyrdom.* So strong was love to Jesus and devotion to the Church, that when persecution raged hotly, Christians, instead of shrinking from the dreadful baptism, eagerly snatched the martyr's crown from amid the breath of flame, rejoicing that they could suffer for Him who gave Himself for them.

3. *Brotherly Love and Unity.* Christians everywhere recognized the holy tie of the Spirit. Their disputes were never suffered to come before a worldly tribunal. Wherever they met, they were not strangers. The Christian traveler found every believer's house a home; and letters of

conference between different churches maintained the closest bonds of unity.

4. *Charity.* This was a remarkable feature of the early Church. The Church's unfortunate were not, as too often now is the case, cast upon the world's cold pity, to the shame of Christ. But, says St. Chrysostom, "The universal practice was to maintain them out of the revenues of the Church,"—the different churches vying with each other in this pious rivalry.

When the Roman governor demanded of the deacon Laurentius that he produce the treasures of the Church, he brought out the widows and orphans, and said, "These are our treasures." Immediately thereafter the noble Christian hero was roasted alive. Homes for the sick, for the aged and infirm, for orphans, and for the entertainment of poor strangers,—of which Gibbon tells us that not a single one existed in the pagan world,—were everywhere erected. Thus did Charity impart her gentle radiance to the lovely spirit of primitive piety.

5. *Belief in the Presence of Christ in the Holy Communion.* "It was generally realized that the Lord's Supper was a most holy mystery, and indispensable food of eternal life,—that the Body and the Blood of the Lord were mystically connected with the bread and wine,—and that those

who in faith partook, enjoyed essential communion with Christ." * Any view making the Sacrament devoid of this great presence, and but an empty *symbol* instead of a *means* richly freighted and overflowing with grace, would have deeply wounded the conscience of the early Church.

As the bread was handed to the communicant, the simple words were said: "This is Christ's Body;" and as the cup was given: "This is Christ's Blood,—the cup of life." The recipient in each case as he took, answered "Amen," showing, also, the prominent place that the *responsive feature* held in primitive religious worship.

6. *Enthusiastic Celebration of the Holy Festivals.* At these seasons, such was the cessation from worldly cares, that a solemn stillness rested upon country and city. The churches could not contain the multitudes that flocked to them. In regard to the Easter Festival, as an example, the Church historian, Neander, says: "Holy week was closed by the great Sabbath, on which many were baptized, and put on their white robes; and in the evening the cities were illuminated, and appeared like streams of fire. The whole population poured along with torches

* Kurtz's Church History.

to church, and vigils were kept till the dawn of the morning of universal jubilee, the feast of the Resurrection."

7. *Practice of Infant Baptism.* This was universal. In A. D. 252, a council of sixty-six bishops declared that its observance was general. And St. Origen, the most eminent and learned Church father of that period, says: "The Church has received, by tradition *from the apostles*, that infants should be baptized."

8. *Catechisation of the Young.* Regular instruction and training in religion, and the arrangement of inquirers into classes of catechumens for that purpose, were the method of preparing the baptized for a public profession in the Church by Confirmation, instead of relying upon sudden and powerful attempts to move the religious feelings.

9. *A High Regard for the Symbol of the Cross.* Affection for this touching and beautiful emblem was a marked feature of the early Church. It was thought to help the believer in "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus;" and in warning him not to forget that he, like his Master, must be crucified to the world. The symbol of the Cross was that external badge by which Christians and Christian churches were everywhere distinguished from the

heathen, to whom it was a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence."

Herein, also, was recognized that great truth of which a skillful general avails himself when he unfurls the flag or country's symbol over his troops to arouse their enthusiasm, viz., that man is a double being, spirit and nature, soul and body; and that when a truth, by means of its outward *symbol*, speaks both to the mind *and to the senses*, it produces a far more powerful effect.

10. *Zeal for Missions.* Feeling that they had themselves but lately been heathen, the early Christians sympathized deeply with those who knew not the blessed Messiah, whose coming had brought light and healing to a world lying in the shadow of death. Large and liberal contributions were accordingly given, even amid the Church's sore poverty, for this purpose. As Paul was the great missionary of the Cross, who spent his life, and finally lost it, in tours of preaching the gospel and planting churches, crossing from Asia into Europe, and bearing witness for Christ at Rome, so individual churches often employed and supported special catechists and missionaries of their own, who traveled among the heathen, and devoted all their time to evangelization.

11. *Strictness of Church Discipline.* Whoever did not lead a consistent Christian life, but re-

lapsed into neglect and open sin, was at first rebuked, and that proving ineffectual, then expelled from the communion of the Church. The fear and favor of modern times in this respect were unknown. This winnowing of the chaff from the wheat, contributed greatly to the pureness of living characteristic of primitive Christians.

12. *A Constant Looking for the Coming of Christ*, the regeneration of the earth, and the consummation of the blessedness of the saints. This belief, resting upon the emphatic declarations of Christ, and upon the well-known expectations of the apostles, exerted a marked effect upon the lives of Christians, upon their walking with God, and upon their entire consecration to Him, whom they expected shortly to see coming upon the clouds of heaven.

Such is a picture in brief of the PRIMITIVE OR EARLY CHURCH, *i. e.*, the visible Church of Christ, in that age of simplicity, when it had not become so much compromised by contact with the world as in the present day. And let the faithful disciple piously study it, and test his own life thereby. "These things," says the apostle, "happened for our example, and for our admonition." We are to look back to the pious fathers, and to the good old ways; and make them *helps* to us in attaining to the perfect spirit that was in

Christ. For, "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for *the old paths*, where is the good way, and *walk therein*." (Jer. vi. 16.)

THE REFORMATION ERA thus also is full of the purest gospel light, and of the keenest grasping of the principle of salvation, succeeding centuries rather having departed from the true evangelical faith then restored, than gotten beyond it, as the distinguished Dr. Dorner clearly demonstrates in his history of Protestantism. That age, too, like the primitive Church, shone eminent with the most illustrious examples of godly life.

LUTHER, in particular, had a marvelous intuition for the mind of the Spirit, drawn from a deep and blessed Christian experience, and from very close fellowship with God, such as perhaps no other modern has possessed, so that the poet COLERIDGE says of him that he was "the most apostolic man after Paul," and JOHN BUNYAN declares of his writings: "I do prefer this book of Martin Luther, excepting the Holy Bible, before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience."

Although there is more of parade in modern piety, yet it falls below the depth, and purity, and holiness, and simple Christlike character, which were attained by the pious FATHERS. Look back then with reverence to the Church, in her haloed

mantle of the Past! Hearken to the counsels, and follow in the footsteps of the godly saints of old; and be spiritual giants in Israel, even as they were!

"O for that flame of living fire,
Which shone so bright in saints of old;
Which bade their souls to heaven aspire,—
Calm in distress, in danger bold.

"Where is that spirit, Lord, which dwelt
In Abraham's breast, and seal'd him Thine?
Which made Paul's heart with rapture melt,
And glow with energy divine?

"That spirit which from age to age,
Proclaimed Thy love, and taught Thy ways?
Brightened Isaiah's vivid page,
And breathed in David's hallowed lays?

"Is not Thy grace as mighty now,
As when Elijah felt its power;
When glory beamed from Moses' brow,
Or Luther braved the scorching hour?"

SECTION III.

Fruits.

TO bear holy FRUIT in the kingdom of God, is an indispensable requisite in running the HEAVENWARD race. No sooner have we entered upon our good confession than this must be the uppermost thought that breaks from our lips,—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Our Saviour said to His disciples, "I have chosen you and ordained you, *that ye should go and bring forth fruit.*" Every servant must be a laborer in the vineyard of the great Husbandman. It is required of a steward of the Lord that he be found faithful; and that he bring his golden sheaves with him in the last great day.

Every new-born soul, then, should be filled with a holy zeal, not to waste his priceless opportunities, but to bear fruit that shall live forever. Our works, too, are the test of our piety. "By their FRUITS ye shall know them." "Faith, if it have not works, is dead." Where Faith does

not bring forth works, rest assured that it is not a genuine, living one. But holy activity and fruit-bearing, feed anew the flame of faith, and keep it ever growing and brightening. The FRUITS, then, of a good Christian race, consider.

CHAPTER I.

A PRECIOUS EXPERIENCE.

WHEN one hearkens to the heavenly call, consecrates himself entirely to God, and fights well the good warfare, there is given him a blessed inner experience. This is the *witness of the Spirit.* It is a sense within, testifying that the Holy Ghost dwells in the soul, that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and that, by the blood of Jesus, our heavy burden of sin is rolled away, and our bosom filled with unspeakable blessedness. For "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This experience is a personal grasping of salvation, a realization that the grace offered to us has been appropriated and made our own.

It is the *assurance of faith*, that we are of the fold of the Good Shepherd. It is an internal witness by which we know the voice of Jesus, and that He will never suffer any one to pluck us out of His Father's hand.

It is a conviction of *perseverance*, a "being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i. 6.) It is a deep and immovable repose in the truth of God's Word, and in the certainty of His holy promises, so that we can rest calmly in Him, even though the world totter at our feet.

It is a lively *hope*, begotten through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ that we are of the elect, and that we shall be "kept by the power of God," unto "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

It is an apprehension of the *mystical union with Christ*—that even as the branch is joined to the vine, as the member to the Body, so are we one in Him;—and that as He stooped to take on our nature, He has likewise raised us up unto Himself, and that He shares all our sins and sorrows, and that we shall share all His righteousness and glory in the presence of His Father.

It is an unutterable feeling of *love* awakened by the surpassing grace displayed by the Most

High toward us poor sinners, in giving His Son to die for us, and in overruling the awful curse of sin, so that it but reveals unknown and immeasurable heights and depths of divine goodness, and causes the glory of the trinal Godhead to shine with a new lustre and power.

It is a *rapture in the Holy Ghost*,—visions of eternal glories brought near by the power of faith, like that of St. Paul when he was caught up to the third heavens, and saw and heard what it was not lawful for a man to utter.

It is a conscious *growth in grace*, so that it is a fact seen by the world, and not unmarked by ourselves, that our faith grows stronger, our besetting sins weaker, our temper more heavenly, and that the likeness of God ever more and more appears manifest in us.

Such is the true Christian's holy experience,—his personal, experimental knowledge that he is born again. And this is one of the most blessed fruits that God can grant to the believer.

In a world of such doubt, and darkness, and uncertainty, blessed be His holy name that He has not left us without a testimony of Himself so clear and unmistakable, that we may cry out in all confidence, "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth," and that even yet in time we may feel that we have a title to a celestial home, which neither

death, nor Satan, nor hell can ever wrest from our hands.

The nature of his individual experience is a matter of the greatest concern to every believer. And well, indeed, should it be. Often with anxious concern will the pious disciple ask himself, Do I know that I am born again? Am I sure that I have the witness of the Spirit? Am I quite certain of my crown? But while thus eagerly asking ourselves this question, do we take the necessary means to bring about this experience?

Is it not here true of us that "the height charms us, but the steps to it do not, and with the summit ever in our eye, we yet linger on the plain?" We are to blame ourselves that our inner life is often so faint and cold. We want to be sure of heaven, and yet not to live and prepare for heaven. But when we meditate much upon our sins, and contemplate tenderly the sorrows of Jesus; and devoutly and daily read the Word; and with utmost fervor celebrate the Holy Sacrament; and continue constant in prayer; and are zealous in pious works; and search for salvation as for hid treasures, then the Holy Ghost will be outpoured upon us, and we "shall know Him, for He dwelleth with us, and shall be in us!" (John xiv. 17.)

Let us remember, also, that this hallowed experience is rather the *fruit* than the seed of piety. Too many look for it at the beginning of the course, and are discouraged because they do not have it. Many, indeed, would make so great a mistake as to demand sure evidence of it even before permitting one to enter upon the Christian race. But faith, and not experience, is the condition of salvation. This clear experience often, indeed, comes not until late in the Christian race. It is the rarest and most golden fruit borne by the tree of life; and to few is it given on earth to taste much of this manna of Paradise. Only at intervals do these extraordinary seasons of a blessed experience of saving grace pass over us, like a breath of heaven, and then we are on our weary, routine path again.

We cannot expect always to be borne along upon the wings of eagles. Many Christians, indeed, of most undoubted piety and of tireless good works, have longed many years in vain, and even gone to their graves without that testimony, clear as the sunlight, which would have been such an unspeakable comfort to them. With them it was, indeed, true, that as St. Paul says, they "walked by faith and not by sight," through all their lives.

And others, again, have professed a mighty and

rapturous experience, whose lives plainly showed that they were under a strong delusion.

Let us, then, use every means, and wrestle with God in prayer, that He give us a precious personal experience of the joys of saving grace. But let us meekly leave the measure thereof to Him, assured that if we are but found faithful, our merciful heavenly Father will never forget His covenant; but bring us at last to drink of the full cup of spiritual rapture at His right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

Within Thy clefts I love to hide,
When darkness o'er me closes;
Where peace and light serene abide,
And my stilled heart reposes.
My soul exults to dwell secure,
Thy strong mountains round her;
She dares to count her triumph sure,
Nor fears lest hell confound her;
Though tumults startle earth and sea,
Thou changeless Rock, they shake not Thee.

From Thee, O Rock, once smitten, flow
Life-giving streams forever;
And whoso doth their sweetness know,
He henceforth thirsteth never.
My lips have touched the crystal tide,
And feel no more returning
The fever that so long I tried
To cool, yet still felt burning;
Ah, wondrous Well Spring! brimming o'er
With living waters evermore.

CHAPTER II.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

A FRUIT of following closely in His hallowed footsteps, and of copying His faultless temper, and of exhibiting His pure and perfect example, is the IMITATION OF CHRIST. A good confession demands a devout aud godly *walk.* Nothing is so beautiful to men and so pleasing to God, as the spectacle of an unblemished Christian life, on whose pure surface is mirrored the lovely image of the Saviour. Such a sight is a more powerful argument in behalf of the Gospel than all the "golden-mouthed" eloquence that ever was uttered. To "have a good report of them that are without," and to compel their regard for the faith we profess is the sacred duty of every member of the Church.

It is when our actions lead the world to "take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus," that our light is not hid under a bushel, but shines like a beacon-fire to guide the steps of the traveler along the way of life. If we bear the name of Christ, let us also show His spirit. But to attain this holy temper, we must ever

keep before us the imitation of Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," says the apostle, and, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His." (Rom. viii. 9.) We must, therefore, ever follow Jesus as our great exemplar.

We are enjoined to be "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." The image of Christ is thus ever drawn anew by the Holy Ghost in the spotless lives of the saints. And it is when men thus see the spirit of Jesus appearing again in flesh and blood, that they are more drawn and attracted to it, than even as found upon those enduring tablets of stone in which it is preserved in the written records of the New Testament.

Our lives as well as our words should declare plainly, like those of Jesus did, that we are "pilgrims and strangers" here, that however attractive these earthly plains, we seek a country, a city yet to come.

When "Enoch walked with God, he was not, for God took him," so close is the path of perfect holiness to the shining way to life. The Psalmist, therefore, desiring thus to abide in the way of the Lord with a true and perfect heart, prayed, "Teach me thy way, O Lord: I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name.'

(Psalm lxxxvi. 11.) When the pious can safely affirm, "Jesus is our pattern and guide,"—"Our conversation is in heaven," then also it may be said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

As our profession has been a high and holy one, so it becomes us that "we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." Having professed ourselves His followers, let us also walk in the footsteps of Christ. Saying that we are the Lord's, let us give our bodies and our souls a living sacrifice unto Him. Holding aloft the Christian banner, let our saintly lives honor it. Every Christian, by the power of his example, through the IMITATION OF CHRIST, is either working for or against God, for or against the Cross, for or against the salvation of souls.

Eternity alone can tell the incalculable results, either for good or evil, that have been effected by Christlike examples. Example is a sculptor, whose chisel working silently, and yet with a sleepless hand, forms and fashions human character far more than aught else. It is by a shining and gentle Christian example, especially, that the poor and the sufferer, deprived of almost every other opportunity, can yet greatly glorify God, and win many to seek the peace that they have found.

Too many church members fall below their good profession in their practice. St. Paul thus bewails these sad cases: "For many walk, of whom I now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Phil. iii. 19.) They walk in the flesh and not in the spirit; they worship this world as their idol; they show the imitation of Satan rather than that of Christ; their hearts are set upon vanity; their example is a stumbling-block instead of a help to poor, wavering souls. By them none will have been lifted up to life, but many will have been brought down to death, and the blood of such immortal souls will be required at their hands.

O then, beloved confessor of the Faith, ask yourself what walk you are maintaining in the presence of your brethren, and in the observation of those that are without, and whether or not they must say of you that your life presents a holy IMITATION OF CHRIST. Examine prayerfully your example, and weigh the influence it may be exerting upon your companions. Look to your temper, to your affections, to your conduct when tried, and to all your outward and visible acts, and see whether you manifest the fruits of the Spirit, which are: "Love, Joy, Peace,

Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance." (Gal. v. 23.)

What a great awakening do not all church-members need upon this subject of the IMITATION OF CHRIST, their Lord and Master, by a godly walk and conversation. To examine the lives of some of them one would almost wonder sometimes whether the power of the gospel had ever reached their hearts, and whether Jesus was at all their pattern and example. And considering the lamentable defects of many Christians in this regard, it is a marvel that the religion of Christ has advanced as much as it has in the world. On the other hand, however, we must remember that the history of the Church has shown many of the sweetest, saintliest, most Christly lives that have transfigured our weak human nature, lives of such rare spiritual beauty that they gleam like a river of light running through a land of darkness.

Let it then be our supreme concern that we may honor the faith we confess; and that from our irreproachable walk, there may shine out a winning lustre of the gospel, and a beautiful image of Jesus, which shall disarm many a foe, and convince men of the power of redeeming grace, and bring them to follow the lowly Nazarene, "who did no sin," and in whose "mouth was found no guile."

CHAPTER III.

USEFULNESS IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

A KINGDOM of evil, and a kingdom of truth and righteousness, are on earth opposed to each other. Of the first, Satan is the head, and all wicked men the servants; and every eye can see the zeal and activity with which they fight for their bad cause. The kingdom of God can only then be advanced by similar watchfulness and activity on the part of the pious.

Our Lord was a notable example of untiring zeal in the kingdom of truth. It is said of Him that "He went about doing good." That He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing "the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." And He says of Himself, "I must *work the works of Him that sent me*, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." (John ix. 4.)

The great husbandman Himself comes at every hour of the day, and calls to the children of the kingdom, "Why stand ye here all the day idle? go, work in my vineyard." It is said also of that great scene in the end of the world: "The fire

shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." (1 Cor. iii. 14.)

It is beyond all question, therefore, that the stewards of the Lord must give account in the last day of the use they have made of their Master's goods, and of the precious opportunities allotted to them. Every man must show that his talents were not hid in a napkin, but employed in the great work of advancing the kingdom of God. Every confessor of Christ who looks for a recompense at the resurrection of the just, must bring his sheaves with him, and hold them aloft to the searching gaze of the Judge. Thus, only, can we be faithful. Thus, only, will we have spent the twelve hours of our day in a manner pleasing to God: when we have "made it our meat and our drink to do the will of Him who hath sent us." THOLUCK justly charges the Christian, "See to it that in your daily actions the love of God is the motive, the will of God the law, and the honor of God the aim."

And this great truth—the necessity of making our usefulness seen and felt in the kingdom of God,—is a solemn question for every member of the Church of Christ. The field is the world; but the Church is the kingdom of God; and it is

by the Church and through the Church that we must make our activity manifest, and that we must bear holy *fruits* in the cause of piety, and for the good of mankind. Every Christian congregation is thus a society pledged to labor and service in behalf of the gospel, in behalf of the conversion of sinners, in the furtherance of missions, and in sowing broadcast the seed of Truth. It is not only the ministry and deacons, who are to work, but every one has his responsibility.

How many drones are there not found in every congregation of believers? Some are too proud to put their hand to the gospel plough; some are too selfish and do not like to mingle with others; some will work well if sufficiently honored and noticed, but if they cannot be at the head, will do nothing; some are merely indifferent and unconcerned; and others, yet again, will not try to make themselves useful, because they are obscure, and think their little help of no value. But not one of these classes will be able to stand in the great day of accounts. Instead of receiving the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant," they will be reckoned unprofitable stewards.

Whatever be our position, we must work and bring forth results. "Cast thy bread upon the waters and it shall return to thee after many days," is the command. God's word will not re-

turn unto Him void; but wherever there is a fervent, sincere effort put forth to do good, the all-accomplishing Spirit of the Lord will bless it and make it effectual.

All can pray. All can speak a word in season. All can utter a cheering voice to the band of laborers. All can give a mite to the cause. There is an open door for every one; *there are ten thousand opportunities to serve our Master, if love but keeps a watchful eye, eager to seize them.*

We can build up Zion. We can cast our little net into the great ocean of sin to catch immortal souls. Though but one Spirit, there is a diversity of gifts and Christian graces; every one has his special gift, which it is his duty to search out and know, and every one must labor according to that talent which God has given him.

One will find his sphere in *the Sunday school;* and in no place is there a rarer opportunity for labor that will result in a usefulness for time and eternity, such as can never be estimated. The teachers of the young, by pious, attentive devotion to duty, can do a work scarcely second to preaching the gospel from the pulpit.

Another will find his opportunity to be useful, through the *large means* which God has given him. And another can be of great value, by ac-

tivity, concern, and wise counsel in the management of the temporal affairs of the Church.

And yet another, as he hears the Macedonian cry: "Come over and help us," as he sees the hedges of Zion broken down, and her vineyards going to waste, and as with Jesus, his heart bleeds that there are too few laborers to gather the great harvests, whose golden grains are fast falling upon the ground, will feel himself called to enter the *gospel ministry*. His conscience will not suffer him to hold his peace while multitudes of souls are perishing for want of the Bread of Life. But, like Paul, a "necessity is laid upon him to preach the gospel." And, as again and again, he hears the voice of the Lord calling, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he can withhold himself no longer, but, surrendering the pursuit of earthly goods and honors, he answers, "Here am I, send me," and though henceforth toil and sacrifice await him here below, yet shall his reward be great in the kingdom of heaven, and thousands saved through his instrumentality shall rise up and call him blessed.

Thus we can *all*, if we but wish, make ourselves useful. It is not the learned, or the great, or the rich, but it is the little army of true, devoted *workers* in any congregation, by whom progress is made in the holy cause of the Lord.

Let us, then, be up and doing; and let us be found faithful; and when summoned to our account, may it be adjudged of us that we have been profitable servants in the kingdom of God, whose usefulness shall be awarded a diadem, thickly gemmed with souls.

CHAPTER IV.

BEARING THE CROSS.

CHRIST and HIM CRUCIFIED! exclaimed the apostle, as his heart overflowed at the mighty wonder of redemption. And thus is it that Christ and THE CROSS are ever inseparably connected. When all other things are barred, and we look but upon that single aspect which most of all expresses the character of Jesus, and which tells it in one word, that word, that symbol is the Cross. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was "despised and rejected of men." His crown was a wreath of thorns. Transfixed upon the cruel tree, His soul endured the baptism of the very woes of hell. Never, perhaps, in eternity can we know, at least, never can we feel, what He suffered for us.

But not only in that final hour did He suffer.

But "even in His earthly course He was never separated from the Cross. It varied in form, never in nature; it was only less prominent, not less real at Bethlehem than at Calvary. The Cross was never dissociated from the life; He carried it in His heart long before the mob laid it on His shoulder, and had suffered all its agonies before the nail was driven into His flesh."

The mystery of the Cross, which Christ thus must needs bear, is found in *sin*, which alone by this severe means could be overcome. Therefore the apostle says: "Who His own self bare our sins in His body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." (1 Peter ii. 24.) Through His sufferings Christ learned obedience, and was made perfect; and by His sharp pains of crucifixion, *atonement* was purchased from God, and we poor sinners were reconciled to the Father. Nothing but that offering of precious blood could wash out the else ineradicable dye of guilt, and clothe us in a wedding garment of purity.

The Cross is the symbol of *love*. It points us to the victory of suffering love upon the hill of Calvary. Love attains its holiest strength in sacrifice. The flower of love blossoms most richly, not under the smiles of a throne, but beneath the dark shade of the Cross.

The Cross is the symbol of *purity*. Suffering refines human nature. Tears and pain chasten the spirit, and winnow from it the dross of carnality, and foster the graces of religion. Therefore says the Scripture: "Behold we count them happy which endure." "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Jesus Himself shrank from the Cross. In Gethsemane He prayed, as the drops of His sweat of blood bedewed the garden, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." (Matt. xxvi. 39.) But having straitened His nature to the supreme trial, His victory purchased for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And this bearing the Cross, even though human nature shrink from it, *is a needed discipline* for which every disciple must be ready. He must be prepared to follow his Master, even though His footprints be traced in blood. "He that *taketh not his Cross*," says Jesus to every candidate for the heavenly crown, "and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." (Luke xiv. 27.) And, says the apostle: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Thus also the pious fathers of the Reformation taught: "For our churches have ever

given instruction concerning the *Holy Cross* which Christians are under obligation to bear; and this is a true, sincere, not a fictitious mortification." * We may shrink from this test, and from bearing this last *fruit* of the Christlike temper, but if we evade our cross, let us remember that "he that findeth his life" in temporal welfare, "shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" in eternal blessedness.

All here depends upon our love. If we have that unutterable devotion which the pardoned sinner feels as he looks upon his thorn-crowned Redeemer, our cross will grow easy, and we will bear it gladly, counting it all joy that we may suffer for His Name. The Christian who is sorely tried will be nearest to his Lord, and will drink the deepest and purest wine of heavenly grace, and will be refreshed with ecstasies in the spirit unknown to those who ever bask in softness and ease.

Bearing the Cross, the tempter retreats far from us, and no other resort will so effectually master besetting sins and destroy the power of indwelling evil. He who denies himself for the glory of God; he who is crucified to somewhat of worldly joys, that he may advance the gospel, most nearly repeats the example of suffering

* Augsburg Confession, Article XXVI.

sacrifice set by his Master, and, therefore, follows closest in His hallowed footsteps.

This is the point in the Christian way where many pilgrims faint. When they come to the CROSS, and when renunciation and self-denial are demanded, then they turn back again to the world. Thus is it that the Cross of Christ is the sharp test that separates the unworthy from the faithful. In the merciful providence of God, the painful Cross which believers once had to bear is not now demanded of them. We are not persecuted; we are not hunted from our peaceful homes; we are not thrown to wild beasts; or fastened to the burning stake; or impaled upon the bloody tree.

But still THERE IS A CROSS FOR EVERY ONE. We must be crucified to carnal pleasure. We must be crucified to the love of riches. We must be crucified to our natural sinful tempers. We must be crucified to worldly idolatry and the spirit of pride. We must endure burdens for the kingdom of God. We must bear the Cross of the Church, that she may prosper by our sacrifices. We must sometimes be crucified to innocent and rightful amusements, at which a weak brother might be tempted. And we must sometimes be crucified to ease, that we may comfort the sick, cheer the forsaken, and uplift the falling.

It is true that there are many who have taken the name of Christ, but have never taken up His Cross. They have never sacrificed the least in His cause. To them the narrow way has been all one of velveted softness and gentle ease. But disclaiming the crucial test, they also lose the right to be called disciples. Let, then, the disciple whose face is set HEAVENWARD, make CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED his great exemplar, and take the Cross of the sorely tried King upon his shoulders. And blessed to his soul will prove its burden. It will give his conscience rest. It will make his bosom pure. It will lead him to drink of living raptures in the spirit. It will woo Christ to meet him in the way, and with smiling approval, guide him on to the heavenly fold.

"VIA CRUCIS! VIA LUCIS!"
Yes! the rough and thorny way
Which the humble Christian chooses,
Gleams with an unearthly ray.

He who trod the path before us
Left a brightness on the road,
And its light is falling o'er us,
As we tread the way to God.

There are thorns that often wound us,
There are barriers in our way,
And sometimes the night surrounds us,
Lighted by no cheering ray.

But THE CROSS is ever beaming,
Darkness cannot dim its light;
All that ever veils its gleaming
Is our sin-beclouded sight.

PART III.

The Blessed Goal.

ALL of human life is only a preparation, there is something beyond. As our earthly years draw to a close, and our race nears THE GOAL, our gaze is turned ahead. But in this last great hour, when the sea of mystery opens before us, all depends upon the wisdom with which we have improved the past. If we have not set out in youth to seek the Christian prize, if we have not spent our day in the fear of the Lord, if we have no memorial stored up on high, uncheered by hope will we find THE GOAL?

But golden is the sunset of that life, which reaches the season of old age, with the consolations of piety, and with the smile of the God of Jacob resting upon it. The Scripture says: "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." (Ps. xxxvii. 37.) But of the wicked it is said: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the *end* thereof are the ways of *death*." Having,

then, in the previous pages followed the pious pilgrim, from the day that he set out upon his GOOD BEGINNING, through the dangers and trials, and the joys and comforts of the HEAVENWARD way, let us now look upon that tranquil season when he approaches THE GOAL of the race, and when he has nearly laid hold of the heavenly crown.

CHAPTER I.

HAPPY MEMORIES.

HOPE writes the poetry of youth; memory, that of old age. In youth, it is the joyous prospect of the future that paints the sky with bright visions, but in old age it is the *retrospect of the past* on which the mind fondly dwells. Memory, then, is ever busy. In the crowded throng, or in the silent solitude, it is still the scenes that once were,—the history in which we have been active figures,—the days of old,—to which, when our race is nearly run, we are ever recurring.

Sad and unwelcome, indeed, is this truth to

the ungodly. No pleasing reminiscences will memory have for them. Eagerly, if they but could, would they blot out the past. For it is but a record that pierces their souls with regret, and awakens stings of conscience that cannot be quieted. Grace rejected, priceless opportunities wasted, eternal life lost, souls ruined by their evil deeds and example, such alone is the story which the past brings in accusing review before them.

But to the pious, how blessed is this retrospect, as it hues the twilight of life's departing day. To their souls the past, too, is a radiant prophecy of the future. It tells them a story of beautiful leadings of Providence, of gentlest mercies concealed in cloud and not discerned until afterwards, and of guardian angels hovering near, and granting invisible help in every dangerous and trying hour of their pilgrimage. Through the thin veil of marvelous events, they now see plainly the mysterious hand that was overruling all for good. And that same Almighty protection, so visible in the past, fills them with hopeful assurance for the future, even as David, when he mused upon the wonders of God shown to him in the days of old, cried out: "When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate upon Thee in the night-watches. Because Thou *hast*

been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice." (Ps. lxiii. 6.)

Step by step, across a desert waste,
The pillar of the cloud has led me on ;
I followed silently a path untraced,
Knowing the future only when 'twas gone.

Had I foreknown the hours of weary pain,
The strife of foes, the darkness and dismay,
All that o'ertook me on the distant plain—
How had I started from Thy chosen way !

But with the trial came the daily strength,
And in the darkest night "a light of fire,"
Till I have learned to wait for Thee at length,
And trust Thy guidance with a hushed desire.

How blessed, then, when old age can spend its remaining hours in abundantly uttering the memory of the great goodness of God, and in singing of the faithfulness of the Lord! It is the holy autumn of piety, in which the soul, ripened by the storms and sunshine of life, hangs like golden fruit upon the tree of humanity, while a tranquil calm, a gentle resignation, soothing memories, and blessed hopes, smile on every side.

And though in this retrospect there will be much to teach us humility, much to convince us of unworthiness, much to grieve us that we have not been more zealous laborers in the kingdom of God, and that we have not attained unto the

piety of the fathers, yet may we be able even innocently to cry out with the boldness of pious Job: "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me; and my judgment was as a robe and a diadem." (Job xxix. 14.)

For, by the blood of Jesus cleansing us, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost guiding and strengthening us, we may have won many a victory over the Tempter, and rejoiced in many advances in grace, and proved ourselves frequent angels of charity and healing to wounded, sorrowing hearts, the retrospect of which will cause our musing souls to thrill with rapture.

Such are the blessed MEMORIES which cheer the pilgrim as he nears the end of his race. They are approving voices of a well-spent past. They are the music of good deeds, whose soothing strains are ever thereafter sweetly attendant upon the pious soul. They are the flowers that bloom in the garden of a godly old age, and that adorn it with even a rarer glory and a richer fragrance than that of youth.

O then! so live in the fear of God, and walk in the holy paths of religion, that thou mayest not wish to erase one line of the past, or have one deed to blot out, or one scene over which to shed a tear! But that thou mayest invite Memory to come and walk with thee, and to while thy weary hours with pleasing pictures of the vicissitudes of thine earthly journey, while Hope with prophetic eye enters the veil of the future, and feeds upon joys to come.

CHAPTER II.

READINESS FOR DEATH.

THE thought of Death is indeed a startling one to the soul that has spent its life in vanity and impiety. For, Death to such means the day of reckoning for misused talents and opportunities, the coming unprepared into the presence of the Maker.

But, it is a blessed reward of a pious pilgrimage, that Death is shorn of his terrors. It is the one who has walked with God, who has laid hold upon the atoning Lamb, and who has trusted to the Word and Promises, who can look with unblanched cheek at the fearful mystery of his final

change. What can thus be a more noble and affecting picture of the calmness, fortitude, and tranquillity, with which the servant of God contemplates the King of Terrors, than that afforded by the Apostle Paul, when,—feeling that his race is nearly run,—he utters these tranquil words: "For I am now READY to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And again, he speaks with still more confidence, declaring that he has "a desire *to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.*" (Phil. i. 23.)

It is then a characteristic of the Christian, and a result of having run his race in the fear of God, that as his retrospect only recalls blessed memories, so his outlook into the unknown future does not shake his calmness. He is not overwhelmed at the thought of meeting his last enemy, but is ready and waiting for Death; and covered by the costly robe of Jesus's righteousness, he does not shrink from confronting the record of his life, nor has he such an absorbing fondness for earthly joys, but that he can at any time bid them adieu. He may, it is true, be in a strait, desiring also to live for the Church, for duty, work and progress, and for those tender ties which bind him to near ones in the flesh, but

even these precious concerns he is willing to commit into the keeping of Him who doeth all things well.

The true Christian, therefore, is ever *ready* for his departure. He has in many respects been a stranger here, his home, his affections, and his hope, have been in the better land. And now, as he sees that life's spring and summer have flown, and that winter's snows are whitening his head, he knows that Death is knocking at the door, that the startling summons may at any moment reach his ear, and that soon he "goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets;" but he is neither distressed nor taken by surprise.

As pious Simeon, when he had beheld the promised Messiah, prayed with a holy contentment, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," so is it our fellowship with Christ by the power of Faith, that prepares us for a peaceful and blessed departure. As it has been good to commune with Jesus so dimly here, in the Church, His earthly sanctuary, so do we feel that it will be yet far better to hold communion with our blessed Lord, eye to eye and face to face, in the temple above.

This, too, is the secret of the Christian's readi-

ness for this dread visitor. To him Death has no terrible meaning. True, there may be a sharp physical struggle; but all else is only bright, hopeful, and serene. *Death to him is the blessed door to glorious life.* It is the toiler at rest, the warrior at peace, the pilgrim forever at home. It will throw a mantle of oblivion over the sins and sorrows and heartaches of time, and draw back that veil which hides the glories that eye hath not seen, and that imagination's most soaring wing has not attained.

To him, therefore, waiting for Death is but A LOOKING FOR THE BLESSED COMING OF THE LORD AND SAVIOUR, even as it was the custom of the early Christians to view it as a—"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 13.) Joy, then, hallowed peace, and blissful hope, fill his breast, as he surveys his departure near at hand, and instead of depression and alarm, he can cry out in rapt welcome:

We wait for THEE—all-glorious One!
We look for Thine appearing!
We hear Thy name, and on Thy throne
We see Thy presence cheering,
Faith even now
Uplifts its brow,
And sees the Lord descending,
And with Him bliss unending.

We wait for THEE! With certain hope—
The time will soon be over;
With childlike longings we look up,
Thy glory to discover.
O bliss! To share
Thy triumph there,
When home, with joy and singing,
The Lord His saints is bringing.

CHAPTER III.

THE VICTORY.

CROSSING the swelling Jordan toward the shining shore will ever be regarded by the Christian pilgrim as the most trying, as it is the last, struggle in the journey HEAVENWARD. It is the supreme conflict of his soul. It is the most solemn and critical scene in which he can ever appear. He is then in the portals of that world of mystery, into which he enters so helpless, so timorous, and so entirely in the hands of Omnipotence. He sees then how absolutely his dearest destiny is at the control of an all-merciful Father. And oh! of what inestimable value is it in that hour to look back upon a life of Faith, of Piety, of Prayer, of Bearing the Cross, and bringing

forth holy fruits for God in the brief day allotted us! Without these hallowed memories of Piety, cheering us, and without the hand of Jesus bearing up our fainting heads, we would surely sink to rise no more as the awful billows sweep over us.

Many Christians, in considering this supreme moment, often fear lest after all it will be a dark time for them, and their faith grow weak, and their hope prove to have had a false foundation. But while to guard against such a fall amid the pains of death, we should live soberly and wisely, and pass the time of our sojourning in godly fear, yet there is no reason for the sincerely pious to mistrust but that their courage will only grow stronger, their Lord draw nearer, and their VICTORY become surer, as their last hour comes upon them.

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be," is the comforting and assuring promise. The Holy Spirit will strengthen the Christian in this his final struggle, as He had never done before. The blessedness of grace, the assurance of the love of God, and the infinite compassion of the Redeemer, never seem at all so strong or precious to us, as when death knocks at the door of our quivering frame.

At first there may be some fainting and misgivings, even as the Saviour was troubled on the

Cross by His apparent desertion by His Father, but, even as soon thereafter, a holy calm of victory gleamed upon His brow, and He peacefully expired with the prayer, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," such will be the experience of the dying Christian. As we bid farewell to earth, and go down into the billows of the swelling Jordan of death, the shining form of our Saviour grows visible, and placing our hand firmly in His, we can cry with the Psalmist: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (Ps. xxiii. 4.)

The prophet Balaam, moved by the Spirit of God, cried out, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." And no scene on earth, where sun is shining, and banners are streaming, and music's strains are waking the air, and all is life, and glow, and radiance, is more beautiful, and inspiring, and glorious, than the chamber in which the Christian is fighting his last great battle, and winning his eternal VICTORY.

We are told that when Lazarus, the beggar, died, he was carried by the angels, who had been waiting unseen at his bedside, far over the gloomy realm of the lost, to the shining Paradise

of the blessed. And Paul, contemplating the resplendent closing scene of life, thus cries in rapture: "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 57.)

A vision of this near presence of the awaiting Saviour, and of the triumphing heavenly host, and perchance strains of passing angelic harmony, such as floated over the plains of Bethlehem on that blessed natal night, are often present to the dying Christian, and entrance his departing soul, and fill his chamber with a glory that makes it the very portal of the city of God.

The dying Stephen thus saw the heavens opened, and the glory of God, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of the Father, and lo! as the vision fixed his eye, all who looked upon him, saw his countenance suddenly shine "as if it had been that of an angel." Well then may the sacred historian say of his barbarous death at the hands of his persecutors, that "*he fell asleep.*" For what earthly violence could disturb so heavenly a serenity, or break the spell of such glorious spiritual rapture? And this peaceful and triumphant departure of the holy martyr

is a symbol of that, which, to a greater or less extent, takes place on every pious death-bed, the seal of which is so often seen in the angelic radiance which still lingers upon the lifeless countenances of those who have died in the transports of the faith.

The final struggle of the Christian, then, is a great, and glorious, and rapturous VICTORY! In it death is conquered, sin destroyed, pain overcome, the grave vanquished, and darkness left behind; and a fair, fadeless, and eternal morn of light and bliss entered upon. It is the victory of Faith, of Love, and of Hope. Let us, therefore, with joyful confidence, hail the hour of our last and sharpest conflict, as but the summons to a victory whose blessed fruits we shall reap forever and for evermore.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CROWN OF LIFE.

HAVING finished his race, and having come a victor out of the good fight of faith against all enemies and dangers, the Christian now enters into the heavenly rest. And when "the times

of restitution of all things" shall be at hand, when the glorious morning of the appearing of Christ shall dawn upon time, when the trumpet of resurrection shall awaken the dead, and when the Church shall be led in her spotless robes to her Marriage with the Lamb, and when heaven and earth shall resound with hosannas of rapture, then shall be the coronation day of the saints. Then shall the Christian receive the fullness of that glory, and bliss, and honor which await him. Then shall the royal diadem which is to be his, be placed upon his brow.

It is the CROWN which was promised him on the eventful day when he bid adieu to the world, and set out for the immortal prize. Then these words did the Spirit address to his soul: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." (Rev. ii. 7.) It is the prize which, amid all the depressions and discouragements of the way, has never ceased to cheer and comfort him, and to gleam with unspeakable beauty before his eye. It is the heavenly reward for which his soul has waited and longed, and toward which faith has often lifted his fondest affections and his most ardent imaginings, as he lingered in this vale of tears.

But now, at last, the glorious hour has arrived.

The long night is over, and the dawn of the eternal day breaks upon him. Tears, and sighs, and conflict, are now forever put behind, and before stretches out but one dazzling way of joy, of brightness, of splendor, and a noonday of rapture, that shall know no twilight shade.

It is a "crown of righteousness." It is a "crown of rejoicing." It is a "crown of glory." It is a "CROWN OF LIFE."

It is "laid up" in the skies for us. Secure in the temple of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, it awaits the hour when the victor shall come to receive it. It is the crown that Christ the Lord will then give, placing it upon the brow of the faithful with His own blessed hand, while all heaven rings again with strains of welcome. And while eternity rolls on it shall never be lost, nor one ray of its lustre be dimmed, though all the powers of hell seek to wrest it from the wearer.

Thus much the Scripture tells, but precisely what these figures mean; and what the CROWN OF LIFE—the joy of heaven—will be, we cannot and we do not need to know. Enough that the noblest symbols of that reward possible to language, are given us. And yet these are mere luminous reflections upon our mortal sky, of that far surpassing and inexpressible glory.

We only now "see through a glass darkly." But in that great day of consummation, we shall know all; we shall gaze upon the unveiled Truth and Trinal splendor, and we shall drink deep of the golden cup of rapture, and, ever thirsting, drink yet again the deeper.

We shall behold God; we shall inherit the mansions prepared for us; we shall take our harps and join in the hallelujahs of the countless throng of the redeemed upon Mount Zion; we shall meet those whom we loved on earth; we shall speed from star to star, bearing the commands of the Infinite; we shall gaze upon the unutterable deeps of divine love; we shall revisit our world, now renewed and glorified from its crucible of fire; we shall dwell in the city which has no need of candle or moon or sun, but which is lightened by the glory of God, and "the gates of which are not shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there;" we shall tread its golden streets, and walk its sapphire pavements; we shall pluck the rapturous fruit of the Tree of Life, whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations;" we shall drink of the "crystal river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb;" and we shall hold most tender and loving and blessed fellowship with our holy Lord and Saviour time without end.

I heard the voice of Harpers, harping sweetly
On harps of gold.
I saw a crystal River—calmly, widely,
Its waters rolled.

I caught the flash of Turrets wrapped in splendor
Of sunless light,
Like to a star most lustrous, shedding glory
Out of the night.

I saw the ranks of Angels, silver-pinioned
And golden-crowned,
Swift, radiant Forms, that like a sunbeam passing
Touched the bright ground.

I saw the ancient Worthies, Heroes saintly,
Resting in calm,
Clad in white robes, out of great tribulation
Bearing the palm.

I saw a King in beauty, cloud-encircled,
Shrouded in light,
The likeness of a Throne, a Sea of glory
Dazzling all sight.

A Voice as of great waters—Myriads falling
Low on the sod,
A Silence—Harps struck louder; Seraphs singing:
GLORY TO GOD!

Such is the Christian pilgrim's CROWN OF LIFE. He has patiently borne his cross along the narrow way, and he has now at last reached the *blessed goal.* May God, in the riches of His Fatherly grace, grant that you, O beloved disciple, may so keep your eye turned HEAVENWARD,

and so run the race set before you, that in the last day you may stand among this hallowed company, and that your joyful lot may be to receive this diadem of glory.

And to Him, who is the Author and Finisher of our Faith, and whose tender mercies are new unto us every morning; and who hath bought us and redeemed us by His precious blood, be praise, honor, dominion, glory, and power, world without end. Amen.